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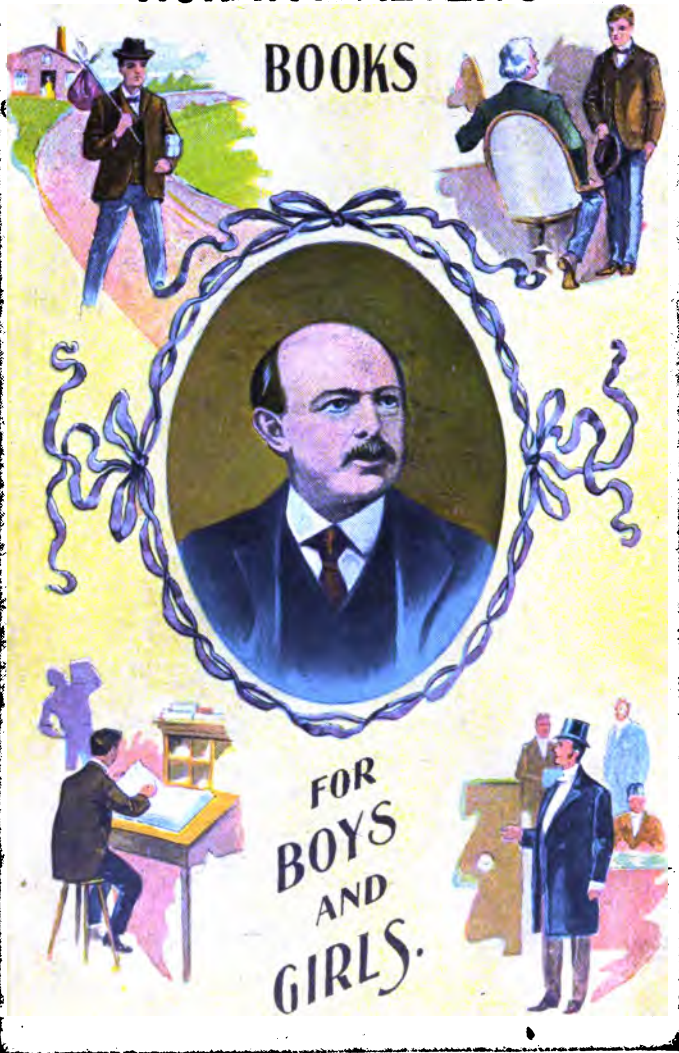




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FOR
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FRANK HUNTER'S PERIL

BY

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

AUTHOR OF "RAGGED DICK SERIES," "LUCK AND FLUCK
SERIES," "TATTERED TOM SERIES," ETC.

THE JOHN C. WINSTON CO.

PHILADELPHIA

CHICAGO

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FRANK HUNTER'S PERIL.

CHAPTER I.

FRANK AND BEN.

“**I**S your mother at home, Frank?” asked a soft voice.

Frank Hunter was stretched on the lawn in a careless posture, but looked up quickly as the question fell upon his ear. A man of middle height and middle age was looking at him from the other side of the gate.

Frank rose from his grassy couch and answered coldly :

“Yes, sir ; I believe so. I will go in and see.”

“Oh, don’t trouble yourself, my young friend,” said Mr. Craven, opening the gate and advancing toward the door with a brisk step. “I will ring the bell ; I want to see your mother on a little business.”

"Seems to me he has a good deal of business with mother," Frank said to himself. "There's something about the man I don't like, though he always treats me well enough. Perhaps it's his looks."

"How are you, Frank?"

Frank looked around, and saw his particular friend, Ben Cameron, just entering the gate.

"Tip-top, Ben," he answered, cordially. "I'm glad you've come."

"I'm glad to hear it; I thought you might be engaged."

"Engaged? What do you mean, Ben?" asked Frank, with a puzzled expression.

"Engaged in entertaining your future step-father," said Ben, laughing.

"My future step-father!" returned Frank, quickly; "you are speaking in riddles, Ben."

"Oh! well, if I must speak out, I saw Mr. Craven ahead of me."

"Mr. Craven! Well, what if you did?"

"Why, Frank, you must know the cause of his attentions to your mother."

"Ben," said Frank, his face flushing with

anger, "you are my friend, but I don't want even you to hint at such a thing as that."

"Have I displeased you, Frank?"

"No, no; I won't think of it any more."

"I am afraid, Frank, you will have to think of it more," said his companion, gravely.

"You surely don't mean, Ben, that you have the least idea that my mother would marry such a man as that?" exclaimed Frank, pronouncing the last words contemptuously.

"It's what all the village is talking about," said Ben, significantly.

"Then I wish all the village would mind its own business," said Frank, hotly.

"I hope they are wrong, I am sure. Craven's a mean, sneaking sort of man, in my opinion. I should be sorry to have him your step-father."

"It's a hateful idea that such a man should take the place of my dear, noble father," exclaimed Frank, with excitement. "My mother wouldn't think of it."

But even as he spoke, there was a fear in his heart that there might be something in

the rumor after all. He could not be blind to the frequent visits which Mr. Craven had made at the house of late. He knew that his mother had come to depend on him greatly in matters of business. He had heard her even consult him about her plans for himself, and this had annoyed him. Once he had intimated his dislike of Mr. Craven, but his mother had reproved him, saying that she considered him a true friend, and did not know how to do without him. But he stifled this apprehension, and assured Ben, in the most positive terms, that there was nothing whatever in the report. Whether there was or not, we shall be able to judge better by entering the house and being present at the interview.

Mrs. Hunter was sitting in a rocking-chair, with a piece of needle-work in her hand. She was a small, delicate-looking woman, still pretty, though nearer forty than thirty, and with the look of one who would never depend on herself, if she could find some one to lean upon for counsel and guidance. Frank, who was strong and resolute, had inherited these

characteristics not from her but from his father, who had died two years previous, his strong and vigorous constitution succumbing to a sudden fever, which in his sturdy frame found plenty to prey upon.

And who was Mr. Craven?

He was, or professed to be, a lawyer, who six months before had come to the town of Shelby. He had learned that Mrs. Hunter was possessed of a handsome competence, and had managed an early introduction. He succeeded in getting her to employ him in some business matters, and under cover of this had called very often at her house. From the first he meant to marry her if he could, as his professional income was next to nothing, and with the money of the late Mr. Hunter he knew that he would be comfortably provided for for life. This very afternoon he had selected to make his proposal, and he knew so well the character and the weakness of the lady that he felt a tolerable assurance of success. He knew very well that Frank did not like him, and he in turn liked our young hero no better, but he always treated him

with the utmost graciousness and suavity from motives of policy.

The room in which they were seated was very neatly and tastefully furnished. He looked, to employ a common phrase, "as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth," and his voice was soft and full of suavity.

They had evidently been talking on business, for he is saying, "Now that our business interview is over, there is another subject, my dear Mrs. Hunter, on which I wish to speak to you."

She looked up, not suspecting what was coming, and said, "What is it, Mr. Craven?"

"It's a very delicate matter. I hardly know how to introduce it."

Something in his look led her to suspect now, and she said, a little nervously, "Go on, Mr. Craven."

"My dear Mrs. Hunter, the frequent visits I have made here have given me such a view of your many amiable qualities, that almost without knowing it, I have come to love you."

Mrs. Hunter dropped her work nervously, and seemed agitated.

"I esteem you, Mr. Craven," she said, in a low voice, "but I have never thought of marrying again."

"Then think of it now, I entreat you. My happiness depends upon it—think of that. When I first discovered that I loved you, I tried hard to bury the secret in my own breast, but—but it became too strong for me, and now I place my fate in your hands."

By this time he had edged round to her side, and lifted her hand gently in his, and pressed it to his lips.

"Do not drive me to despair," he murmured softly.

"I—I never thought you loved me so much, Mr. Craven," said Mrs. Hunter, in agitation.

"Because I tried to hide it."

"Can you not still be my friend and give up such thoughts?"

"Never, never!" he answered, shaking his head. "If you deny my suit, I shall at once leave this village, and bury my sorrow and desolation of heart in some wild prairie

scene, far from the haunts of men, where I shall linger out the remnant of my wretched life."

"Don't—pray don't, Mr. Craven," she said, in a tone of distress.

But, feeling that surrender was at hand, he determined to carry the fortress at once. He sank down on his knees, and, lifting his eyes, said:

"Say yes, I entreat you, dear Mrs. Hunter, or I shall be miserable for life."

"Pray get up, Mr. Craven."

"Never, till I hear the sweet word, 'yes.'"

"Yes, then," she answered, hastily, scarcely knowing what she said.

At this moment, while Mr. Craven was yet on his knees, the door opened suddenly, and Katy, the Irish maid-of-all-work, entered:

"Holy St. Pathrick!" she exclaimed, as she witnessed the tableau.

Mrs. Hunter blushed crimson, but Mr. Craven was master of the situation. Cleverly taking advantage of it to fix the hasty consent he had obtained, he turned to Katy with his habitual smirk.

"Katy, my good girl," he said, "you must not be too much startled. Shall I explain to her, dear Mrs. Hunter?"

The widow, with scarlet face, was about to utter a feeble remonstrance, but he did not wait for it.

"Your mistress and I are engaged, Katy," he said, briskly. "You shall be the first to congratulate us."

"Indade, sir!" exclaimed Katy. "Is it goin' to be married, ye are?"

"Yes, Katy."

"I congratulate you, sir," she said, significantly.

"Plague take her!" thought Mr. Craven; "so she has the impudence to object, has she? I'll soon set her packing when I come into possession."

But he only said, with his usual suavity:

"You are quite right, Katy. I feel that I am indeed fortunate."

"Indade, mum, I didn't think you wud marry ag'in," said Katy, bluntly.

"I—I didn't intend to, Katy, but—"

"I couldn't be happy without her," said

Mr. Craven, playfully. "But, Katy, you had something to say to Mrs. Hunter."

"What will I get for supper, mum?"

"Anything you like, Katy," said Mrs. Hunter, who felt too much flustered to give orders. "Will you stay to supper, Mr. Craven?"

"Not to-night, dear Mrs. Hunter. I am sure you will want to think over the new plans of happiness we have formed. I will stay a few minutes yet, and then bid you farewell till to-morrow."

"That's the worst news Katy O'Grady's heard yet," said Katy, as she left the room and returned to her own department. "How can my mistress, that's a rare lady, if ever there was one, take up wid such a mane apology for a man. Shure I wouldn't take him meself, not if he'd go down on forty knees to me—no, I wouldn't," and Katy tossed her head.

CHAPTER II.

MR. CRAVEN'S COURTSHIP.

WHEN Katy left the room, Mr. Craven still kept his place at the side of the widow.

"I hope," he said softly, "you were not very much annoyed at Katy's sudden entrance?"

"It was awkward," said Mrs. Hunter.

"True, but, after all, is there anything to be ashamed of in our love?"

"I am afraid, Mr. Craven, I do not love you."

"Not yet, but you will. I am sure you will when you see how completely I am devoted to you."

"It seems so sudden," faltered Mrs. Hunter.

"But, setting aside my affection, think how much it will relieve you of care. Dear Mrs.

Hunter, the care of your property and the responsibility of educating and training your son is too much for a woman."

"Frank never gives me any trouble," said Mrs. Hunter. "He is a good boy."

"He is a disagreeable young scamp, in my opinion," thought Mr. Craven, but he said, unwittingly speaking the truth :

"He is indeed a noble boy, with excellent qualities, but you will soon be called upon to form plans for his future, and here you will need the assistance of a man."

"I don't know but what you are right, Mr. Craven. I should have consulted you."

"Only one who fills a father's place, dear Mrs. Hunter, can do him justice."

"I am afraid Frank won't like the idea of my marrying again," said Mrs. Hunter, anxiously.

"He may not like it at first, but he will be amenable to reason. Tell him that it is for your happiness."

"But I don't know. I can't feel sure that it is."

"I am having more trouble than I ex-

pected," thought Mr. Craven. "I must hurry up the marriage or I may lose her, and, what is of more importance, the money she represents. By the way, I had better speak on that subject."

"There are some who will tell you that I have only sought you because you are rich in this world's goods—that I am a base and mercenary man, who desires to improve his circumstances by marriage, but you, I hope, dear Mrs. Hunter—may I say, dear Mary—will never do me that injustice."

"I do not suspect you of it," said Mrs. Hunter, who was never ready to suspect the motives of others, though in this case Mr. Craven had truly represented his object in seeking her.

"I knew you would not, but others may try to misrepresent me, and therefore I feel it necessary to explain to you that my wealth, though not equal to your own, is still considerable."

"I have never thought whether you were rich or poor," said Mrs. Hunter. "It would not influence my decision."

While she spoke, however, it did excite in her a momentary surprise to learn that since Mr. Craven was rich, he should settle down in so small and unimportant a place as Shelby, where he could expect little business of a professional nature.

"I know your generous, disinterested character," he said; "but still I wish to explain to you frankly my position, to prove to you that I am no fortune-hunter. I have twenty thousand dollars invested in Lake Superior mining stocks, and I own a small house in New York City, worth about fifteen thousand dollars. It is not much," he added, modestly, "but is enough to support me comfortably, and will make it clear that I need not marry from mercenary motives. I shall ask the privilege of assisting to carry out your plans for Frank, in whom I feel a warm interest."

"You are very generous and kind, Mr. Craven," said Mrs. Hunter, "but his father amply provided for him. Two-thirds of his property was left to Frank, and will go to him on his twenty-first birth-day."

"Drat the boy," thought Mr. Craven, "he stands between me and a fortune."

But this thought was not suffered to appear in his face.

"I am almost sorry," he said, with consummate hypocrisy, "that he is so well provided for, since now he does not stand in need of my help, that is, in a pecuniary way. But my experience of the world can at least be of service to him, and I will do my best to make up to him for the loss of his dear father."

These last words were feelingly spoken. She realized how much she was wanting in the ability to guide and direct a boy of Frank's age. Mr. Craven was a lawyer, and a man of the world. He would be able, as he said, to relieve her from all care about his future, and it was for Frank that she now lived. Her feelings were not enlisted in this marriage with Mr. Craven. Indeed, on some accounts it would be a sacrifice.

The result was, that twenty minutes later, when he started homeward, Mrs. Hunter had ratified her promise, and consented to an early marriage. Mr. Craven felt that he had, in-

deed, achieved a victory, and left the house with a heart exulting in his coming prosperity.

Frank Hunter and Ben Cameron were on the lawn, conversing, when the lawyer passed them.

"Good afternoon, Frank," he said with suavity.

"Good afternoon, sir," answered Frank, gravely.

"The old fellow is very familiar," said Ben, when Mr. Craven had passed out of the gate.

"He is more familiar than I like," answered Frank. "I don't know why it is, Ben, but I can't help disliking him."

He had reason to dislike Mr. Craven, and he was destined to have still further cause, though he did not know it at the time.

CHAPTER III.

UNWELCOME NEWS.

SHORTLY after Mr. Craven's departure, Ben announced that he must be going. Left alone, Frank went into the house. He felt rather sober, for though he did not believe that his mother was in any danger of marrying again—least of all, Mr. Craven—the mere possibility disturbed him.

"Is mother up stairs, Katy?" he asked.

"Yes," said Katy, looking very knowing. "She went up as soon as Mr. Craven went away."

"He staid a long time. He seems to come here pretty often."

"May be he'll come oftener and stay longer, soon," said Katy, nodding her head vigorously.

"What do you mean, Katy? What makes you say such things?"

"What do I mane? Why do I say such things? You'll know pretty soon, I'm thinking."

"I wish you'd tell me at once what you mean?" said Frank, impatiently.

"Mr. Craven doesn't come here for nothing, bad 'cess to him," said Katy, oracularly.

"You don't mean, Katy —" exclaimed Frank, in excitement.

"I mean that you're goin' to have a step-father, Master Frank, and a mighty mane one, too; but if your mother's satisfied, it ain't for Katy O'Grady to say a word, though he isn't fit for her to wipe her shoes on him."

"Who told you such a ridiculous story?" demanded Frank, angrily.

"He told me himself shure," said Katy. "Didn't I pop in when he was on his knees at your mother's feet, and didn't he ask me to congratulate him, and your mother said never a word? What do you say to that Master Frank, now?"

"I think there must be some mistake, Katy," said Frank, turning pale. "I will go and ask my mother."

"No' wonder the child can't abide havin' such a mane step-father as that," soliloquized Katy. "He looks like a sneakin' hyppercrite, that he does, and I'd like to tell him so."

Mrs. Hunter was an amiable woman, but rather weak of will, and easily controlled by a stronger spirit. She had yielded to Mr. Craven's persuasions because she had not the power to resist for any length of time. That she did not feel a spark of affection for him, it is hardly necessary to say, but she had already begun to feel a little reconciled to an arrangement which would relieve her from so large a share of care and responsibility. She was placidly thinking it all over when Frank entered the room hastily.

"Have you wiped your feet, Frank?" she asked, for she had a passion for neatness. "I am afraid you will track dirt into the room."

"Yes—no—I don't know," answered Frank, whose thoughts were on another subject. "Has Mr. Craven been here?"

"Yes," replied his mother, blushing a little.

"He seemed to stay pretty long."

"He was here about an hour."

"He comes pretty often, too."

"I consult him about my business affairs, Frank."

"Look here, mother, what do you think Ben Cameron told me to-day?"

"I don't know, I am sure, Frank."

"He said it was all over the village that you were going to marry him."

"I—I didn't think it had got round so soon," said the widow, nervously.

"So soon! Why, you don't mean to say there's anything in it, mother?" said Frank, impetuously.

"I hope it won't displease you very much, Frank," said Mrs. Hunter, in embarrassment.

"Is it true? Are you really going to marry that man?"

"He didn't ask me till this afternoon, and, of course, it took me by surprise, and I said so, but he urged me so much that I finally consented."

"You don't love him, mother? I am sure you can't love such a man as that."

"I never shall love any one again in that way, Frank—never any one like your poor father."

"Then why do you marry him?"

"He doesn't ask me to love him. But he can relieve me of a great many cares and look after you."

"I don't want anybody to look after me, mother—that is, anybody but you. I hate Mr. Craven!"

"Now that is wrong, Frank. He speaks very kindly of you—very kindly indeed. He says he takes a great interest in you."

"I am sorry I cannot return the interest he professes. I dislike him, and I always have. I hope you won't be angry, mother, if I tell you just what I think of him. I think he's after your property, and that is what made him offer himself. He is poor as poverty, though I don't care half so much for that as I do for other things."

"No, Frank; you are mistaken there," said credulous Mrs. Hunter, eagerly. "He is not poor."

"How do you know?"



"He told me that he had twenty thousand dollars' worth of mining stock out West somewhere, besides owning a house in New York."

Frank looked astonished.

"If he has as much property as that," he said, "I don't see what makes him come here. I don't believe his business brings him in three hundred dollars a year."

"That's the very reason, Frank. He has money enough, and doesn't mind if business is dull. He generously offered to pay—or was it help pay?—the expenses of your education; but I told him that you didn't need it."

"If I did, I wouldn't take it from him. But what you tell me surprises me, mother. He doesn't look as if he was worth five hundred dollars in the world. What made him tell you all this?"

"He said that some people would accuse him of being a fortune-hunter, and he wanted to convince me that he was not one."

"It may be a true story, and it may not," said Frank.

"You are really very unjust, Frank," said his mother. "I don't pretend to love

Mr. Craven, and he doesn't expect it, but I am sure he has been very kind, and he takes a great deal of interest in you, and you will learn to know him better."

"When you are married to him?"

"Yes."

"Mother," exclaimed Frank, impetuously, "don't marry this man! Let us live alone, as we have done. We don't want any third person to come in, no matter who he is. I'll take care of you."

"You are only a boy, Frank."

"But I am already fifteen. I shall soon be a man at any rate, and I am sure we can get along as well as we have done."

Mrs. Hunter was not a strong or a resolute woman, but even women of her type can be obstinate at times. She had convinced herself, chiefly through Mr. Craven's suggestion, that the step she was about to take was for Frank's interest, and the thought pleased her that she was sacrificing herself for him. The fact that she didn't fancy Mr. Craven, of course heightened the sacrifice, and so Frank found her far more difficult of persuasion than he

anticipated. She considered that he was but a boy and did not understand his own interests, but would realize in future the wisdom of her conduct.

"I have given my promise, Frank," she said.

"But you can recall it."

"It would not be right. My dear Frank, why can you not see this matter as I do? I marry for your sake."

"Then, mother, I have the right to ask you not to do it. It will make me unhappy."

"Frank, you do not know what is best. You are too young."

"Then you are quite determined, mother?" asked Frank, sadly.

"I cannot draw back now, Frank. I—I hope you won't make me unhappy by opposing it."

"I won't say another word, mother, since you have made up your mind," said Frank, slowly. "When is it going to be?"

"I do not know yet. Mr. Craven wants it to be soon."

"You will let me know when it is decided, mother?"

"Certainly, Frank."

He left the room sad at heart. He felt that for him home would soon lose its charms, and that he would never get over the repugnance which he felt against his future step-father.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. CRAVEN'S FOUR-LEGGED ENEMY.

MR. CRAVEN sought his office in a self-complacent mood.

"By Jove!" he said to himself, "I'm in luck. It's lucky I thought to tell her that I was rich. I wish somebody would come along and buy that Lake Superior mining stock at five cents on a dollar," he soliloquized, laughing softly; "and if he'd be good enough to let me know whereabouts that house in New York is, I should feel very much obliged. However, she believes it, and that's enough. No, on the whole, it isn't quite enough, for I must have some ready money to buy a wedding suit, as well as to pay for my wedding tour. I can't very well call upon Mrs. Craven that is to be for that. Once married, I'm all right."

The result of these cogitations was that

having first secured Mrs. Hunter's consent to a marriage at the end of two months, he went to New York to see how he could solve the financial problem.

He went straightway to a dingy room in Nassau Street, occupied by an old man as shabby as the apartment he occupied. Yet this old man was a capitalist, who had for thirty years lent money at usurious interest, taking advantage of a tight money market and the needs of embarrassed men, and there are always plenty of the latter class in a great city like New York. In this way he had accumulated a large fortune, without altering his style of living. He slept in a small room connected with his office, and took his meals at some one of the cheap restaurants in the neighborhood. He was an old man, of nearly seventy, with bent form, long white beard, face seamed with wrinkles, and thick, bushy eyebrows, beneath which peered a pair of sharp, keen eyes. Such was Job Green, the money-lender.

"Good morning," said Mr. Craven, entering his office.

"Good morning, Mr. Craven," answered the old man. He had not met his visitor for a long time, but he seldom forgot a face. "I haven't seen you for years."

"No, I'm living in the country now."

"In the country?"

"Yes, in the town of Shelby, fifty miles from the city."

"Aha! you have retired on a fortune?" inquired the old man, waggishly.

"Not yet, but I shall soon, I hope."

"Indeed!" returned Job, lifting his eyebrows as he emphasized the word. "Then you find business better in the country than in the city?"

"Business doesn't amount to much."

"Then how will you retire on the fortune, Mr. Craven? I really should like to know. Perhaps I might move out there myself."

"I don't think, Mr. Green," said Craven, with his soft smile, "you would take the same course to step into a fortune."

"And why not?" inquired the old man, innocently.

"Because I am to marry a rich widow," said Mr. Craven.

"Aha! that is very good," said Job, laughing. "Marrying isn't exactly in my line, to be sure. Who is the lucky woman?"

"I will tell you, Mr. Green, for I want you to help me in the matter."

"How can I help you? You don't want money if you are going to marry a fortune," said Job, beginning to be suspicious that this was a story trumped up to deceive him.

"Yes, I do, and I will tell you why. She thinks I am rich."

"And marries you for your money? Aha! that is very good," and the man laughed.

"I told her I owned twenty thousand dollars' worth of stock in a Lake Superior mine."

"Very good."

"And a fifteen-thousand-dollar house in this city."

"Oh, you droll dog! You'll kill me with laughing, Mr. Craven; I shall certainly choke," and old Job, struck with the drollness

of regarding the man before him as a capitalist, laughed till he was seized with a coughing spell.

"Well, well, Craven, you're a genius," said Job, recovering himself. "You wouldn't—ha! ha!—like to have me advance you a few thousand on the mines, would you now, or take a mortgage on the house?"

"Yes, I would."

"I'll give you a check on the bank of Patagonia, shall I?"

"I see you will have your joke, Mr. Green. But I do want some money, and I'll tell you why. You see I am to be married in two months, and I must have a new suit of clothes, and go on a wedding tour. That'll cost me two or three hundred dollars."

"Ask Mrs. Craven for the money."

"I would, if she were Mrs. Craven, but it won't do to undeceive her too soon."

"You don't expect me to furnish the money, Craven, do you?"

"Yes, I do."

"What security have you to offer?"

"The security of my marriage."

"Are you sure there is to be a marriage?" demanded Job, keenly. "Tell me, now, is the rich widow a humbug to swindle me out of my money? Aha! Craven, I have you."

"No, you haven't, Mr. Green," said Craven, earnestly. "It's a real thing; it's a Mrs. Hunter of Shelby; her husband died two years ago."

"How much money has she got?"

"Sixty thousand dollars."

"What, in her own right?"

"Why, there's a son—a boy of fifteen," said Mr. Craven, reluctantly.

"Aha! Well how much has he got of this money?"

"I'll tell you the plain truth, Mr. Green. He is to have two-thirds when he comes of age. His mother has the balance, and enjoys the income of the whole, of course providing for him till that time."

"That's good," said Job, thoughtfully.

"Of course, what she has I shall have," added Craven. "To tell the truth," he continued, smiling softly, "I shan't spoil the young gentleman by indulgence when he is

my step-son. I shan't waste much of his income on him."

"Perhaps the mother will raise a fuss," suggested Job.

"No, she won't. She's a weak, yielding woman. I can turn her round my finger."

"Well, what do you want then?"

"I want three hundred and fifty dollars for ninety days."

"And suppose I let you have it?"

"I will pay you five hundred. That will allow fifty dollars a month for the loan."

"But you see, Craven, she might give you the slip. There's a risk about it."

"Come to Shelby yourself, and make all the inquiries you see fit. Then you will see that I have spoken the truth, and there is no risk at all."

"Well, well, perhaps I will. If all is right, I may let you have the money."

Two days afterward the old man came to Shelby, stipulating that his traveling expenses should be paid by Craven. He inquired around cautiously, and was convinced that the story was correct. Finally he agreed to

lend the money, but drove a harder bargain than first proposed—exacting six hundred dollars in return for his loan of three hundred and fifty. It was outrageous, of course, but he knew how important it was to Mr Craven, and that he must consent.

Frank, according to his determination, said not a word further to his mother about the marriage. He avoided mentioning Mr. Craven's name even. But an incident about this time, though Frank was quite innocent in the matter, served to increase Mr. Craven's dislike for him.

He had spent the evening with Mrs. Hunter, and was about to leave the house when a watch-dog, which Frank had just purchased, sprang upon him, and, seizing him by the coat-tails, shook him fiercely.

Mr. Craven disliked dogs, and was thoroughly frightened. He gave a loud shriek, and tried to escape, but the dog held on grimly.

"Help, help!" he shrieked, at the top of his voice.

Frank heard the cry from the house, and ran out.

At this juncture he managed to break away from the dog, and made a rush for the garden wall.

"Down, Pompey! Ain't you ashamed of yourself?" said Frank, sternly, seizing the dog by the collar.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Craven," he added.

Mr. Craven turned wild with rage, and his soft voice trembled as he said :

"Really, Frank, it is hardly fair to your visitors to keep such a fierce animal about."

"He didn't know you, sir. To-morrow I will make you acquainted, and then there will be no danger of this occurring again."

"I really hope not," said Craven, laughing rather discordantly.

"I hope he hasn't bitten you, sir."

"No, but he has torn my coat badly. However, it's of no consequence. Accidents will happen."

"He takes it very well," thought Frank, as Mr. Craven said good-night. But it was by a strong effort that his future step-father had done so.

"Curse the dog!" he said to himself, with

suppressed passion. "After I am married and fairly settled down, I will shoot him. Thus I will spite the boy and revenge myself on the brute at the same time."

CHAPTER V.

MR. CRAVEN'S RETURN.

MR. CRAVEN called the next day, as usual. Frank apologized again for Pompey's rude treatment of the evening previous, and, as far as he could, established friendly relations between the parties. Pompey, who had nothing vicious about him, and was only anxious to do his duty, looked meek and contrite, and Mr. Craven, to all appearance, had quite forgiven him.

"Good dog!" he exclaimed, patting Pompey's head. "Say no more about it, Frank," he said, in his usual soft voice; "it was only an accident. I foresee that Pompey and I will be excellent friends in future."

"I hope your coat isn't much torn, sir."

"It can easily be repaired. It isn't worth mentioning. Is your mother at home?"

"Yes, sir. Walk in."

"He behaves very well about it," thought Frank. "He may be a better man than I thought. I wish I could like him, as he is to be my step-father; but I think there are some persons it is impossible to like."

So the time passed, and the wedding-day drew near. Frank did not consider it honorable to make any further objection to the marriage, though he often sighed as he thought of the stranger who was about to be introduced into their small circle.

"Mother will seem different to me when she is that man's wife," he said to himself. "I shall love her as much, but she won't seem to belong to me as much as she did."

In due time the wedding was celebrated. Mrs. Hunter wished it to be quiet, and Mr. Craven interposed no objection. Quiet or not, he felt that the substantial advantages of the union would be his all the same. Mrs. Hunter looked a little nervous during the ceremony, but Mr. Craven was smiling and suave as ever. When he kissed his wife, saluting her as Mrs. Craven, she shuddered a little, and with difficulty restrained her tears,

for it reminded her of her first marriage, so different from this, in which she wedded a man to whom she was devoted in heart and soul.

The ceremony took place at eleven o'clock, and the newly-wedded pair started on a tour as previously arranged. So for two weeks Frank and Katy O'Grady were left alone in the house. Katy was a privileged character, having been in the family ever since Frank was a baby, and she had no hesitation in declaring her opinion of Mr. Craven.

"What possessed the mistress to marry such a mane specimen of a man, I can't tell," she said.

"I don't like him myself," said Frank; "but we must remember that he's my mother's husband now, and make the best of him."

"And a mighty poor best it will be," said Katy.

"There you go again, Katy!"

"I can't help it, shure. It vexes me intirely that my dear mistress should throw herself away on such a man."

"What can't be cured must be endured, you know. You mustn't talk that way after Mr. Craven comes back."

"And what for will I not. Do you think I'm afraid of him?" asked Katy, defiantly. "If he is a man, I could bate him in a square fight."

"I don't know but you could, Katy," said Frank, glancing at the muscular arms and powerful frame of the handmaiden; "but I really hope you won't get into a fight," he added, smiling. "It wouldn't look well, you know."

"Then he'd better not interfere wid me," said Katy, shaking her head.

"You must remember that he will be master of the house, Katy."

"But he sha'n't be master of Katy O'Grady," said that lady, in a very decided tone.

"I don't suppose you'll have much to do with him," said Frank.

He sympathized with Katy more than he was willing to acknowledge, and wondered how far Mr. Craven would see fit to exercise

the authority of a step-father. He meant to treat him with the respect due to his mother's husband, but to regard him as a father was very repugnant to him. But he must be guided by circumstances, and he earnestly hoped that he would be able to live peacefully and harmoniously with Mr. Craven.

Days passed, and at length Frank received a dispatch, announcing the return home.

"They will be home to-night, Katy," he said.

"I'll be glad to see your mother, shure," said Katy, "but I wish that man wasn't comin' wid her."

"But we know he is, and we must treat him with respect."

"I don't feel no respect for him."

"You must not show your feelings, then, for my mother's sake."

At five o'clock the stage deposited Mr. and Mrs. Craven at the gate.

Frank ran to his mother, and was folded in her embrace. Then he turned to Mr. Craven, who was standing by, with his usual smile, showing his white teeth.

"I hope you have had a pleasant journey, sir," he said.

"Thank you, Frank, it has been very pleasant, but we are glad to get home, are we not, my dear?"

"I am very glad," said Mrs. Craven, thankfully, and she spoke the truth; for though Mr. Craven had been all attention (he had not yet thought it prudent to show himself in his true colors), there being no tie of affection between them, she had grown inexpressibly weary of the soft voice and artificial smile of her new husband, and had yearned for the companionship of Frank, and even her faithful handmaiden, Katy O'Grady, who was standing on the lawn to welcome her, and only waiting till Frank had finished his welcome.

"How do you do, Katy," said her mistress.

"I'm well, mum, thankin' you for askin', and I'm mighty glad to see you back."

"I hope you are glad to see me also, Katy," said Mr. Craven, but his soft voice and insinuating smile didn't melt the hostility of Miss O'Grady.

"I'm glad you've brought the mistress home safe," she said, with a low bow ; "we've missed her from morning till night, sure ; haven't we, Master Frank ?"

"I see she isn't my friend," thought Mr. Craven. "She'd better change her tune, or she won't stay long in my house."

He had already begun to think of himself as the sole proprietor of the establishment, and his wife as an unimportant appendage.

"I hope you have some supper for us, Katy," said he, not choosing at present to betray his feelings, "for I am quite sure Mrs. Craven and myself have a good appetite."

"Mrs. Craven !" repeated Katy, in pretended ignorance. "Oh, you mean the mistress, sure."

"Of course I do," said Mr. Craven, with a frown, for once betraying himself.

"Supper is all ready, ma'am," said Katy, turning to Mrs. Craven. "It'll be ready as soon as you've took off your things."

When they sat down to the table, Frank made a little mistake. He had always been accustomed to sit at the head of the table, op-

posite his mother, and on the frequent occasions of Mr. Craven's taking a meal there during the engagement, the latter had taken the visitor's place at the side.

So to-night, without thinking of the latter's new relations to him, Frank took his old place. Mr. Craven noticed it, and soft and compliant as he was, he determined to assert his position at once. "I believe that is my place," he said, with an unpleasant smile.

"Oh, I beg pardon," said Frank, his face flushing.

"You forgot, I suppose," said Mr. Craven, still smiling.

"Yes, sir."

"You'll soon get used to the change," said his step-father, as he seated himself in the chair Frank had relinquished.

Mrs. Craven looked a little uncomfortable. She began to realize that she had introduced a stranger into the family, and that this would interfere to a considerable extent with their old pleasant way of living.

No one seemed inclined to talk except Mr. Craven. He seemed disposed to be sociable,

and passed from one subject to another, regardless of the brief answers he received.

"Well, Frank, and how have you got along since we were away?" he asked.

"Very well, sir."

"And you haven't missed us then?"

"I have missed my mother, and should have missed you," he added politely, "if you had been accustomed to live here."

"And how is Pompey?" asked Mr. Craven, again showing his teeth.

"The same as usual. I wonder he was not out on the lawn to receive you and my mother."

"I hope he wouldn't receive me in the same way as he did once," said Mr. Craven, again displaying his teeth.

"No danger, sir. He didn't know you then."

"That's true, but I will take care that he knows me now," said Mr. Craven, softly.

"I think he will remember you, sir; he is a good dog, and very peaceable unless he thinks there are improper persons about."

"I hope he didn't think me an improper person," said Mr. Craven.

"No fear, sir."

Frank wondered why Mr. Craven should devote so much time to Pompey, but he was destined to be enlightened very soon.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DIFFICULTY OF KILLING A DOG.

IF Frank supposed that Mr. Craven had forgotten or forgiven Pompey's attack upon him, he was mistaken. Within a week after Mr. Craven had been established as a permanent member of the household, Katy, looking out of the kitchen window, saw him advancing stealthily to a corner of the back yard with a piece of raw meat in his hand. He dropped it on the ground, and then, with a stealthy look around, he withdrew hastily.

"What is he doin', sure?" said the astonished Katy to herself; then, with a flash of intelligence, she exclaimed, "I know what he manes, the dirty villain! The meat is p'isoned, and it's put there to kill the dog. But he shan't do it, not if Katy O'Grady can prevint him."

The resolute handmaid rushed to the pan-

try, cut off a piece of the meat meant for the morrow's breakfast, and carrying it out into the yard, was able, unobserved by Mr. Craven, to substitute it for the piece he had dropped. This she brought into the kitchen, and lifting it to her nose, smelled it. It might have been Katy's imagination, but she thought she detected an uncanny smell.

"It's p'isoned, sure!" she said. "I smell it plain; but it shan't harm poor Pomp! I'll put it where it'll never do any harm."

She wrapped it in a paper, and carrying it out into the garden, dug a hole in which she deposited it.

"Won't the ould villain be surprised when he sees the dog alive and well to-morrow morning?" she said to herself, with exultation.

Fifteen minutes later, Mr. Craven, from an upper window, had the satisfaction of seeing the dog greedily eating what he supposed would be his last meal on earth.

"That'll fix him!" he muttered, smiling viciously. "He won't attack me again very soon. Young impudence will never know

what hurt the brute. That's the way I mean to dispose of my enemies."

Probably Mr. Craven did not mean exactly what might be inferred from his remarks, but he certainly intended to revenge himself on all who were unwise enough to oppose him.

Mr. Craven watched Pompey till he had consumed the last morsel of the meat, and then retired from the window, little guessing that his scheme had been detected and baffled.

The next morning he got up earlier than usual, on purpose to enjoy the satisfaction of seeing his four-footed enemy stretched out stiff and stark. What was his astonishment to see the dog jumping over a stick at the command of his young master. Had he suddenly seen Pompey's ghost (supposing dogs to have ghosts), he could scarcely have been more astonished or dismayed.

"Goodness gracious! that dog must have a cast-iron constitution!" he said to himself. "There was enough strychnine on that meat to kill ten men. I don't understand it at all."

“He looks as if his grandmother had died and left him nothin’ at all in her will,” said Katy to herself, slyly watching him out of the window. “The ould villain’s disappointed sure, and it’s Katy O’Grady he’s got to thank for it, if he only knew it.”

“Good morning, sir,” said Frank, for the first time noticing the presence of Mr. Craven.

“Good morning, Frank,” replied his stepfather, opening his mouth with his customary smile. “Pompey seems lively this morning.”

“Yes, sir. I am teaching him to jump over this stick.”

“Good dog!” said Mr. Craven, patting him softly.

“Oh, the ould hypocrite!” ejaculated Katy, who had slyly opened the window a trifle and heard what he said. “He tries to p’ison the poor creeter, and thin calls him good dog.”

Mr. Craven meanwhile was surveying Pompey curiously.

“I certainly saw him eat the meat,” he said to himself, “and I am sure it was tainted with a deadly poison. Yet here the dog is

alive and well, after devouring every morsel of it. It is certainly the most curious case I ever heard of."

Mr. Craven went into the house, and turned to the article on strychnine in an encyclopædia, but the statements he there found corroborated his previously formed opinion as to the deadly character and great strength of the poison. Pompey must certainly be an extraordinary dog. Mr. Craven was puzzled.

Meanwhile Katy said to herself:

"Shall I tell Master Frank what Mr. Craven tried to do? Not yit. I'll wait a bit, and while I'm waitin' I'll watch. He don't suspect that Katy O'Grady's eyes are on him, the villain!"

It may not be considered suitable generally for a maid-of-all-work to speak of her employer as a villain; but then Katy had some grounds for her use of this term, and being a lady very decided in her language, it is not singular that such should have been her practice.

Notwithstanding the apparent superiority

of Pompey's constitution to the deadliest poison, Mr. Craven's murderous intent was by no means laid aside. He concluded to try another method of getting him out of the way. He had a pistol in his trunk, and he resolved to see if Pompey was bullet-proof as well as poison-proof.

Three days later, therefore, when Frank was at school, and Mrs. Craven was in attendance at the house of a neighbor, at a meeting of the village sewing-circle, Mr. Craven slipped the pistol into his pocket and repaired to the back yard, where Pompey, as he anticipated, was stretched out in the sun, having a comfortable nap.

"Pompey," said Mr. Craven, in a low tone, "come here. Good dog."

Pompey walked up, and, grateful for attention, began to fawn upon the man who sought to lure him to death.

"Good dog! Fine fellow!" repeated Mr. Craven, stroking him.

Pompey seemed to be gratefully appreciative of the kindness.

Low and soft as were his tones—for he did

not wish to attract any attention—Mr. Craven was overheard. Katy O'Grady's ears were sharp, and at the first sound she drew near to the window, where, herself unobserved, she was an eye and ear witness of Mr. Craven's blandishments.

"What is the ould villain doin' now?" she said to herself. "Is he going to thry p'isonin' him again?"

But no piece of meat was produced. Mr. Craven had other intentions.

"Come here, Pompey," said he, soothingly; "follow me, sir."

So saying, he rose and beckoned the dog to follow him.

Pompey rose, stretching his limbs, and obediently trotted after his deadly foe.

"Where's he takin' him to?" thought Katy. "He manes mischief, I'll be bound. The mis-thress is gone, and Master Frank's gone, and he thinks there ain't nobody to interfere. Katy O'Grady, you must go after him and see what he's up to."

Katy was in the midst of her work, but she didn't stop for that. She had in her hand a

glass tumbler, which she had been in the act of wiping, but she didn't think to put it down. Throwing her apron over her head, she followed Mr. Craven at a little distance. He made his way into a field in the rear of the house. She went in the same direction, but on the other side of a stone wall which divided it from a neighboring field. From time to time she could catch glimpses, through the loosely laid rocks, of her employer, and she could distinctly hear what he was saying.

"My friend Pompey," he said, with a smile full of deadly meaning, "you are going to your death, though you don't know it. That was a bad job for you when you attacked me, my four-footed friend. You won't be likely to trouble me much longer."

"What's he going to do to him?" thought Katy; "it's not p'ison, for he hasn't got any meat. May be it's shootin' him he manes."

Mr. Craven went on.

"Poison doesn't seem to do you any harm, but I fancy you can't stand powder and ball quite so well."

"Yes, he's goin' to shoot him. What will

I do?" thought Katy. "I'm afraid I can't save the poor creetur's life."

By this time Mr. Craven had got so far that he considered it very unlikely that the report of the pistol would be heard at the house. He stopped short, and, with a look of triumphant malice, drew the pistol from his pocket. Pompey stood still, and looked up in his face.

"How can he shoot the poor creetur', and him lookin' up at him so innocent?" thought Katy. "What will I do? Oh, I know—I'll astonish him a little."

Mr. Craven was just pointing the pistol at Pompey, when Katy flung the tumbler with force against his hat, which rolled off. In his fright at the unexpected attack, the pistol went off, but its contents were lodged in a tree near by, and Pompey was unhurt.

Mr. Craven looked around him with startled eyes, but he could not see Katy crouching behind the wall, nor did he understand from what direction the missile had come.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS O'GRADY'S VICTORY.

CROUCHING behind the stone wall, Katy enjoyed the effect of what she had done. She particularly enjoyed the bewildered look of Mr. Craven, who, bare-headed, looked on this side and on that, unable to conjecture who had thrown the missile.

Pompey, unconscious of the danger he had escaped, walked up to the tumbler and smelt of it. This attracted the attention of Mr. Craven, who stooped and picked it up. His bewilderment increased. If it had been a stone, he would have understood better, but how a tumbler should have found its way here as a missile was incomprehensible.

It slowly dawned upon him that the person who threw it must be somewhere near. Then again, on examining it further, he began to suspect that it was one of his wife's tum-

blers, and he jumped to the conclusion that it was Frank who threw it.

"If it is he, I'll wring his neck!" he murmured, revengefully. "I mean to find out."

"Pompey," he said, calling the dog, "do you see this tumbler?"

Pompey wagged his tail.

"Who threw it?"

Pompey looked up, as if for instructions.

"Go find him!" said Mr. Craven, in a tone of command.

The dog seemed to understand, for he put his nose to the ground and began to run along, as if in search.

"Oh, murther! What if he finds me?" thought Katy, crouching a little lower. "Won't he be mad, jist?"

Katy might have crawled away unobserved, very possibly, if she had started as soon as the missile was thrown. Now, that dog and man were both on the lookout, escape was cut off.

"Will he find me?" Katy asked herself, with some anxiety.



KATY O'GRADY'S VICTORY.

The question was soon answered.

Pompey jumped over the wall, and a joyous bark announced his discovery. He knew Katy, and seemed to fancy that she had concealed herself in joke. He jumped upon her, and wagged his tail intelligently, as if to say :

"You see, I've found you out, after all."

Mr. Craven hurried to the wall, eagerly expecting to detect Frank in the person concealed. He started back in astonishment as Katy O'Grady rose and faced him. Then he became wrathful, as he realized that his own hired servant had had the audacity to fling a tumbler at his hat.

"What brings you out here, Katy?" he demanded, with a frown.

"Shure, sir," said Katy, nonchalantly, "I was tired wid stayin' in the hot kitchen, and I thought I'd come out and take the air jist."

"And so you neglected the work."

"The worruk will be done; niver you mind about that."

"Did you fling this tumbler at my head?" demanded Mr. Craven, sternly.

"Let me look at it, sir."

Katy looked at it scrutinizingly, and made answer :

"Very likely, sir."

"Don't you know?"

"I wouldn't swear it was the same one, sir, but it looks like it."

"Then you admit throwing a tumbler at my head, do you?"

"No, sir."

"Didn't you say you did just now?"

"I threw it at your hat."

"It is the same thing. How came you to have the cursed impudence to do such a thing?" asked her master, wrathfully.

"Because you was goin' to shoot the dog," said Katy, coolly.

"Suppose I was, is it any business of yours?"

"The dog doesn't belong to you, Mr. Craven. It belongs to Master Frank."

"I don't think it expedient for him to keep such an ill-natured brute around."

"He calls you a brute, Pomp," said Katy, caressing Pompey—"you that's such a good dog. It's a shame!"

"Catherine," said Mr. Craven, with outraged dignity, "your conduct is very improper. You have insulted me."

"By the powers, how did I do it?" asked Katy, with an affectation of innocent wonder.

"It was an insult to throw that tumbler at my head. I might order the constable to arrest you."

"I'd like to see him thry it!" said Katy, putting her arms akimbo in such a resolute fashion that Mr. Craven involuntarily stepped back slightly.

"Are you aware that I am your master?" continued Mr. Craven, severely.

"No, I'm not," answered Katy, promptly.

"You are a servant in my house."

"No, I'm not. The house don't belong to you at all, sir. It belongs to my mistress and Master Frank."

"That's the same thing. According to the law, I am in control of their property," said Mr. Craven, resolved upon a master-stroke which, he felt confident, would overwhelm his adversary. "After the great impropriety of which you have been guilty this

afternoon, I discharge you from my employment."

"You discharge me!" exclaimed Katy, with incredulous scorn.

"I discharge you, and I desire you to leave the house to-morrow."

"You discharge me!" repeated Katy, with a ringing laugh. "That's a good one."

Mr. Craven's cadaverous face colored with anger.

"If you don't go quietly, I'll help you out," he added, incautiously.

"Come on, then," said Katy, assuming a warlike attitude. "Come on, then, and we'll see whether you can put out Katy O'Grady."

"Your impudence will not avail you. I am determined to get rid of you."

"And do ye think I'm goin' to lave the house, and my ould misthress, and Master Frank, at the orders of such an interloper as you, Mr. Craven?" she cried, angrily.

"I don't propose to multiply words about it," said Mr. Craven, with an assumption of dignity. "If you had behaved well,

you might have stayed. Now you must go."

"Must I?" sniffed Katy, indignantly.
"Must I, indade?"

"Yes, you must, and the less fuss you make about it the better."

Mr. Craven supposed that he had the decided advantage, and that Katy, angry as she was, would eventually succumb to his authority. But he did not know the independent spirit of Catherine O'Grady, whose will was quite as resolute as his own.

"And ye think I'm goin' at your word—I that's been in the family since Master Frank was a baby?"

"I am sorry for you, Katy," said Mr. Craven, in triumphant magnanimity. "But I cannot permit a servant to remain in my house who is guilty of the gross impropriety of insulting me."

"I know why you want to get rid of me," said Katy, nodding her head vigorously.

"Why?" asked Craven, with some curiosity.

"You want to p'ison the dog."

Mr. Craven started. How had his secret leaked out?

"What do you mean?"

"Mane! I mane that I saw you lavin' the p'isoned mate for the dog three days ago, and if it hadn't been for me he'd have eaten it, and the poor creetur would be stiff in death."

"He did eat it. I saw him," said Mr. Craven, hastily.

"No, he didn't. It wasn't the same mate!" said Katy, triumphantly.

"What was it, then?"

"It was a piece I cut off and carried out to him," said Katy. "The other I wrapped up in a piece of paper, and buried it in the field."

Mr. Craven's eyes were opened. Pompey's cast-iron constitution was explained. After all, he was not that natural phenomenon which Mr. Craven had supposed him to be. But he was angry at Katy's interference no less.

"Say no more," he said. "You must go. You have no right to interfere with my plans."

"Say no more? Won't I be tellin' the misthress and Master Frank how you tried to kill the poor dog, first with p'ison, and nixt wid a pistol?"

There was something in this speech that made Mr. Craven hesitate and reflect.

He knew that Katy's revelation would provoke Frank, and make him an enemy, and he feared the boy's influence on his mother, particularly as he was concocting plans for inducing his wife to place some of her money in his hand under pretext of a new investment. He must be careful not to court hostile influences, and after all, he resolved to bear with Katy, much as he disliked her.

"On the whole, Katy," he said, after a pause, "I will accept your apology, and you may stay."

"My apology!" said Katy, in astonishment.

"Yes, your explanation. I see your motives were good, and I will think no more about it. You had better not mention this matter to Mrs. Craven or Frank, as it might disturb them."

"And won't you try to kill Pomp agin?" asked Katy.

"No; I dislike dogs, especially as they are apt to run mad, but as Frank is attached to Pompey, I won't interfere. You had better take this tumbler and wash it, as it is uninjured."

"All right, sir," said Katy, who felt that she had gained a victory, although Mr. Craven assumed that it was his.

"I am very glad you are so devoted to your mistress," said Mr. Craven, who had assumed his old suavity. "I shall propose to her to increase your wages."

"He's a mighty quare man!" thought the bewildered Katy, as she hurried back to her work, followed by Pompey.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRANK IS OBSTINATE.

MR. CRAVEN had as yet gained nothing from his marriage. He was itching to get possession of his wife's property. Then his next step would be Frank's more considerable property. He was beginning to be low in pocket, and in the course of a month or so Mr. Green's note for six hundred dollars would fall due. He knew enough of that estimable gentleman to decide that it must be met, and, of course, out of his wife's money.

"My dear," he said one day, after breakfast, Frank being on his way to school, "I believe I told you before our marriage that I had twenty thousand dollars invested in Lake Superior mines."

"Yes, Mr. Craven, I remember it."

"It is a very profitable investment," con-

tinued her husband. "What per cent. do you think it pays me?"

"Ten per cent.," guessed Mrs. Craven.

"More than that. During the last year it has paid me twenty per cent."

"That is a great deal," said his wife, in surprise.

"To be sure it is, but not at all uncommon. You, I suppose, have not got more than seven or eight per cent. for your money?"

"Only six per cent."

Mr. Craven laughed softly, as if to say, "What a simpleton you must be!"

"I didn't know about these investments," said his wife. "I don't know much about business."

"No, no. I suppose not. Few women do. Well, my dear, the best thing you can do is to empower me to invest your money for you in future."

"If you think it best," said Mrs. Craven.

"Certainly; it is my business to invest money. And, by the way, the income of Frank's property is paid to you, I believe."

"Yes."

"He does not come into possession till twenty-one."

"That was his father's direction."

"And a very proper one. He intended that you should have the benefit of the income, which is, of course, a good deal more than Frank needs till he comes of age."

"I thought perhaps I ought to save up the surplus for Frank," said Mrs. Craven, hesitating.

"That is not necessary. Frank is amply provided for. He might be spoiled by too much money."

"I don't think so. Frank is an excellent boy," said his mother, warmly.

"So he is," said Mr. Craven. "He has a noble, generous disposition, and for that very reason is more liable to be led astray."

"I hope he won't be led astray. I should feel wretched if I thought anything would befall him," said his mother, shuddering.

"We will look after him; we will see that he goes straight," said Mr. Craven, cheerfully. "But I wanted to suggest, my dear, that it

would be proper that I should be appointed joint guardian with you."

"I am not sure whether Frank will like it," said his mother, who was aware that Frank, though scrupulously polite to his step-father, had no cordial liking or respect for him.

"As to that, my dear, I count upon you exerting your influence in the matter. If you recommend it he will yield."

"Don't you think it just as well as it is?" said Mrs. Craven, hesitatingly. "Of course, we shall go to you for counsel and advice in anything important."

"You don't seem to have confidence in me," said Mr. Craven, with an injured air.

"I hope you won't think that, Mr. Craven," said his wife, hastily.

"How can I help it? You know my interest in Frank, yet you are unwilling to have me associated in the guardianship."

"I didn't say I objected. I said Frank might."

"You are not willing to urge him to favor the measure."

"You misunderstand me. Yes, I will," said yielding Mrs. Craven.

"Thank you, my dear," said Mr. Craven, with one of his most unctuous smiles. "I was quite sure you would do me justice in the end. By the way, what disposition is made of Frank's property if he does not live to come of age?"

"You—you don't think he is likely to be taken away?" said Mrs. Craven, in distress.

"You are a goose," said her husband, laughing softly. "Of course not. But then we are all mortal. Frank is strong, and will, I hope, live to smooth our dying pillows. But, of course, however improbable, the contingency is to be thought of."

"I believe the property comes to me in that case, but I am sure I should not live to enjoy it."

"My dear, don't make yourself miserable about nothing. Our boy is strong, and has every prospect of reaching old age. But it is best to understand clearly how matters stand. By the way, you need not say any-

thing about the guardianship to him till I tell you."

Mrs. Craven not only complied with this request, but she surrendered to Mr. Craven the entire control of her money within an hour. She raised one or two timid objections, but these were overruled by her husband, and in the end she yielded. Mr. Craven was now in funds to pay the note held by Job Green, and this afforded him no little relief.

A few evenings later, Frank was about to take his cap and go out, when Mr. Craven stopped him.

"Frank," he said, "if you have no important engagement, your mother and I desire to speak to you on a matter of some consequence."

"I was only going to call on one of my friends," said Frank. "I will defer that and hear what you have to say."

"Thank you," said Mr. Craven, smiling sweetly. "I wished to speak to you on the subject of your property."

"Very well, sir."

"Your mother is your guardian, she tells me."

"Yes, sir."

"The responsibilities of a guardian are very great," proceeded Mr. Craven, leaning back upon his chair. "Naturally there are some of them to which a woman cannot attend as well as a man."

Frank began to understand what was coming, and, as it was not to his taste, he determined to declare himself at once.

"I couldn't have a better guardian than my mother," he said.

"Of course not. (I am afraid I shall find trouble with him, thought Mr. Craven.) Of course not. You couldn't possibly find any one as much interested in your welfare as your mother."

"Certainly not, sir."

"As your step-father, I naturally feel a strong interest in you, but I do not pretend to have the same interest as your mother."

"I never expected you would, sir," said Frank, "and I don't want you to," he added, to himself.

"But your mother is not used to business, and, as I said, the responsibilities of a guardian are great."

"What do you propose, sir?" asked Frank, gazing at his step-father steadily. "Do you recommend me to change guardians—to give up my mother?"

"No, by no means. It is best that your mother should retain the guardianship."

"Then, sir, I don't quite understand what you mean."

"I mean to suggest that it would be well for another to be associated in the guardianship, who might relieve your mother of a part of her cares and responsibilities."

"I suppose you mean yourself, sir," said Frank.

"Yes—ahem!" answered Mr. Craven, coughing softly, "as your step-father, it would naturally occur to your mind that I am the most suitable person. Your mother thinks as I do."

"Do you want Mr. Craven to be guardian with you, mother?" asked Frank, turning to his mother.

"Mr. Craven thinks it best," said his mother, in a little embarrassment. "He knows more about business matters than I do, and I have no doubt he is right."

Frank understood that it was entirely Mr. Craven's idea, and something made it very repugnant to him. He did not want to be under the control of that man. Though he knew nothing to his disadvantage, he distrusted him. He had never ceased to regret that his mother married him, and he meant to have as little to do with him as politeness would permit.

He answered, therefore :

"I hope, Mr. Craven, that you won't be offended if I say that I don't wish any change in the guardianship. If another were to be added, I suppose it would be proper that you should be the one, but I am content with my mother as guardian, and wish no other."

"I am afraid," said Mr. Craven, with a softness of tone which by no means accorded with his inward rage, "that you are unmindful of the care the sole guardianship will impose on your mother."

"Has it been much care for you, mother?" asked Frank.

"Not yet," said Mrs. Craven, hesitating, "but perhaps it may."

"I suppose Mr. Craven will always be ready to give you advice if you need it," said Frank, though the suggestion was not altogether to his taste, "but I would rather have you only as my guardian."

"Well, let us drop the subject," said Mr. Craven, gayly. "As you say, I shall always be ready to advise, if called upon. Now, my dear Frank, go to your engagement, I won't detain you any longer."

But when Mr. Craven was alone, his countenance underwent a change.

"That boy is a thorn in my side," he muttered, with compressed lips. "Sooner or later, he must be in my power, and his fortune under my control. Patience, Richard Craven! A dull-witted boy cannot defeat your plans!"

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGER APPEARS ON THE SCENE.

“**H**OW do you like your step-father, Frank,” asked Ben Cameron as the two boys were walking home from school together.

“You mean Mr. Craven?”

“Of course. He is your step-father, isn’t he?”

“I suppose he is, but I don’t like to think of him in that way.”

“Is he disagreeable, then?”

“He treats me well enough,” said Frank, slowly; “but, for all that, I dislike him. His appearance, his manners, his soft voice and stealthy ways are all disagreeable to me. As he is my mother’s husband, I wish I could like him, but I can’t.”

“I don’t wonder at it, Frank. I don’t fancy him myself.”

"Somehow, everything seems changed since he came. He seems to separate my mother from me."

"Well, Frank, I suppose you must make the best of it. If he doesn't interfere with you, that is one good thing. Some step-fathers would, you know."

"He hasn't, so far; but sometimes I fear that he will in the future."

"Have you any reason for thinking so?"

"A day or two since he called me, just as I was leaving the house to come and see you, and asked if I were willing to have him join with my mother as my guardian."

"What did you say?"

"That I didn't want any change. He said the responsibility was too great for a woman."

"What answer did you make?"

"That my mother could get as much help and advice as she needed, even if she were sole guardian."

"Did he seem angry?"

"Not at all. He turned it off very pleasantly, and said he would not detain me any longer."

"Then why should you feel uneasy?"

"I think there's something underhand about him. He seems to me like a cat that purrs and rubs herself against you, but has claws concealed, and is open to scratch when she gets ready."

Ben laughed.

"The comparison does you credit, Frank," said he. "There's something in it, too. Mr. Craven is like a cat—that is, in his ways; but I hope he won't show his claws."

"When he does I shall be ready for him," said Frank, stoutly. "I am not afraid of him, but I don't like the idea of having such a person in the family."

They had arrived at this point in the conversation when they were met by a tall man, of dark complexion, who was evidently a stranger in the village. In a small town of two thousand inhabitants, where every person is known to every other, a strange face attracts attention, and the boys regarded this man with curiosity. He paused as they neared him, and, looking from one to the other, inquired :

"Can you direct me to Mr. Craven's office?"

The two boys exchanged glances.

Frank answered :

"It is that small building on the left-hand side of the street, but I am not sure whether he is there yet."

Curious to know how the boy came to know so much of Mr. Craven's movements, the stranger said :

"Do you know him?"

"Yes, sir ; he is my step-father."

It was the first time he had ever made the statement, and, true as he knew it to be, he made it with rising color and a strange reluctance.

"Oh, indeed !" returned the stranger, looking very much surprised. "He is your step-father?"

"Yes ; he married my mother," said Frank, hurriedly.

"Then you think he may not have come to the office yet?"

"There he is, just opening the door," said Ben, pointing to Mr. Craven, who, unaware

of the interest his appearance excited, was just opening the door of the office, in which he was really beginning to do a little business. His marriage to a woman of property, and the reports which had leaked out that he had a competence of his own, had inspired a degree of confidence in him which before had not existed.

"Thank you," said the stranger. "As he is in, I will call upon him."

CHAPTER X.

A CONSPIRACY AGAINST FRANK.

“SO he’s married again, the sly villain!” muttered the stranger, as, after leaving the boys, he proceeded on his way to Mr. Craven’s office. “That will be good news for my sister, won’t it? And so that’s his stepson? A nice-looking, well-dressed boy. Likely Craven has feathered his nest, and married a fortune. If so, all the better. I may get a few feathers for my own nest, if I work my cards right.”

Meanwhile Mr. Craven had seated himself at an office table, and was looking over a paper of instructions, having been commissioned to write a will for one of the town’s people. He had drawn out a printed form, and had just dipped his pen in the ink, when a knock was heard at the outer door that opened upon the street.

"I suppose it's Mr. Negley, come for the will. He'll have to wait," thought Craven, and as the thought passed through his mind, he said, "Come in !"

The door opened.

He mechanically raised his eyes, and his glance rested upon the man whom we have introduced in the last chapter.

A remarkable change came over Mr. Craven's face. First surprise, then palpable dismay, drove the color from his cheeks, and he stood up in silent consternation.

The other appeared to enjoy the sensation caused by his arrival, and laughed.

"Why, man, you look as if I were a ghost. No such thing. I'm alive and well, and delighted to see you again," he added, significantly. "By Jove, I've had hard work finding you, but here I am, you see."

"How—did—you—find—me?" asked Craven, huskily.

"How did I find you? Well, I got upon your tracks in New York. Never mind how, as long as I have found you. Well, have you no welcome for me?"

"What do you want of me?" asked Mr. Craven, sullenly.

"What do I want of you?" echoed the other, with a laugh. "Why, considering the relationship between us—"

Mr. Craven's pallor increased, and he shifted his position uneasily.

"Considering the relationship between us, it is only natural that I should want to see you."

He paused, but Mr. Craven did not offer any reply.

"By the way, your wife is very uneasy at your long absence," continued the newcomer, fixing his eyes steadily upon the shrinking Craven.

"For Heaven's sake stop, or speak lower!" exclaimed Craven, exhibiting the greatest alarm.

"Come, now, Craven, is any allusion to your wife so disagreeable? Considering that she is my sister, it strikes me that I shall have something to say on that subject."

"Don't allude to her, Sharpley," said the

other, doggedly. "I shall never see her again. We—we didn't live happily, and are better apart."

"You may think so, but do you think I am going to have my sister treated in this way—deserted and scorned?"

"I can't help it," was the dogged reply.

"You can't? Why not?"

And the man addressed as Sharpley fixed his eyes upon his brother-in-law.

"Why do you come here to torment me?" said Craven, fiercely, brought to bay. "Why can't you leave me alone? Your sister is better off without me. I never was a model husband."

"That is where you are right, Craven; but, hark you!" he added, bending forward, "do you think we are going to stand by and do nothing while you are in the enjoyment of wealth and the good things of life?"

"Wealth? What do you mean?" stammered Craven.

The other laughed slightly.

"Do you take me for a mole? Did you suppose I wouldn't discover that you are mar-

ried again, and that your marriage has brought you money?"

"So you have found it out?" said Mr. Craven, whose worst apprehensions were now confirmed.

"I met your step-son a few minutes ago, and he directed me here."

"Did you tell him?" asked Craven, in dismay.

"Tell him? No, not yet. I wanted to see you first."

"I'm glad you didn't. He doesn't like me. It would be all up with me if you had."

"Don't be frightened, Craven. It may not be so bad as you think. We may be able to make some friendly arrangement. Tell me about it, and then we'll consult together. Only don't leave anything untold. Situated as we are, I demand your entire confidence."

Here the door opened, and Mr. Negley appeared.

"Have you finished that 'ere dokkymment, Mr. Craven?" asked the old-fashioned farmer, to whom the name belonged.

"No, Mr. Negley," said Mr. Craven, with his customary suavity, "not yet, I am sorry to say. I've had a great deal to do, and I am even now consulting with a client on an important matter. Could you wait till to-morrow?"

"Sartain, Mr. Craven. I ain't in no hurry. Only, as I was passing, I thought I'd just inquire. Good mornin', squire."

"Good morning, Mr. Negley."

"So you are in the lawyer's line again, Craven?" said Sharpley. "You are turning to good account that eight months you spent in a law office in the old country?"

"Yes, I do a little in that line."

"Now, tell me all about this affair of yours. I don't want to ruin you. May be we can make an arrangement that will be mutually satisfactory."

Thus adjured, and incited from time to time by questions from his visitor, Mr. Craven unfolded the particulars of his situation.

"Well, the upshot of it is, Craven, that you've feathered your nest, and made yourself comfortable. That's all very well; but it seems

to me, that your English wife has some rights in the matter."

"You need not tell her," said Craven, hastily. "What good will it do?"

"It won't do you any good, but it may benefit her and me."

"How can it benefit 'her and me?' How can it benefit either of you, if I am found out, and obliged to flee from this place into penury?"

"Why, not exactly in that way. In fact, I may feel disposed to let you alone, if you'll come down handsomely. The fact is, Craven, my circumstances are not over prosperous, and of course I don't forget that I have a rich brother-in-law."

"You call me rich. You are mistaken. I get a living, but the money is my wife's."

"If it is hers, you can easily get possession of it."

"Only one-third of it belongs to her. Two-thirds belong to that boy you met—my stepson."

"Suppose he dies?"

"It goes to my wife."

"Then you have some chance of it."

"Not much ; he is a stout, healthy boy."

"Look here, Craven, you must make up your mind to do something for me. Give me a thousand dollars down."

"I couldn't without my wife finding out. Besides you would be coming back for more."

"Well, perhaps I might," said the other, coolly.

"You would ruin me," exclaimed Craven, sullenly. "Do you think I am made of money?"

"I know this—that it will be better for you to share your prosperity with me, and so insure not being disturbed. Half a loaf is better than no bread."

Mr. Craven fixed his eyes upon the table, seriously disturbed.

"How much is the boy worth?" asked Sharpley, after a pause.

"Forty thousand dollars."

"Forty thousand dollars!" exclaimed Sharpley, his eyes sparkling with greed. "That's splendid."

"For him, yes. It doesn't do me any good."

"Didn't you say, that in the event of his death the money would go to your wife?"

"Yes."

"He may die."

"So may we. That's more likely. He's a stout boy, as you must have observed, since you have met him."

"Life is uncertain. Suppose he should have a fever, or meet with an accident."

"Suppose he shouldn't."

"My dear Craven," said Sharpley, drawing his chair nearer that of his brother-in-law, "it strikes me that you are slightly obtuse, and you a lawyer, too. Fie upon you! My meaning is plain enough, it strikes me."

"What do you mean?" inquired Craven, coloring, and shifting uneasily in his chair. "You wouldn't have me murder him, would you?"

"Don't name such a thing. I only mean, that if we got a good opportunity to expose him to some sickness, and he happened to die of it, it would be money in our pockets."

Craven looked startled, and his sallow face betrayed by its pallor his inward disturbance.

"That is absurd," he said. "There is no chance of that here. If the boy should die I shouldn't mourn much, but he may live to eighty. There's not much chance of any pestilence reaching this town."

"Perhaps so," said the other, shrugging his shoulders, "but then this little village isn't the whole world."

"You seem to have some plan to propose," said Mr. Craven, eagerly. "What is it?"

"I propose," said Sharpley, "that you send the boy to Europe with me."

"To Europe?"

"Yes; on a traveling tour, for his education, improvement, anything. Only send him under my paternal care, and—possibly he might never come back."

Mr. Craven was not a scrupulous man, and this proposal didn't shock him as it should have done, but he was a timid man, and he could not suppress a tremor of alarm.

"But isn't there danger in it?" he faltered.

"Not if it is rightly managed," said Sharpley.

"And how do you mean to manage it?"

"Can't tell yet," answered the other, carelessly. "The thought has just occurred to me, and I have had no time to think it over. But that needn't trouble you. You can safely leave all that to me."

Mr. Craven leaned his head on his hand and reflected. Here was a way out of two embarrassments. This plan offered him present safety and a continuance of his good fortune, with the chance of soon obtaining control of Frank's fortune.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Sharp-ley.

"I should like it well enough, but I don't know what my wife and the boy will say."

"Has Mrs. Craven the—second—a will of her own?"

"No, she is very yielding."

"Doesn't trouble you, eh? By the way, what did she see in you, Craven, or my sister either, for that matter, to attract her? There's no accounting for tastes, surely."

"That is not to the point," said Craven, impatiently.

"You are right. That is not to the point. Suppose we come to the point, then. If your wife is not strong-minded she can be brought over, and the boy, if he is like most boys, will be eager to embrace the chance of visiting Europe, say for three months. It will be best, I suppose, that the offer should come from me. I'll tell you what you must do. Invite me to supper to-night and offer me a bed, and I'll lay the train. Shall it be so?"

"Agreed," said Craven, and thus the iniquitous compact was made.

CHAPTER XI.

TRAPPED.

“**M**RS. CRAVEN, I have pleasure in introducing to you one of my oldest friends, Colonel Sharpley.”

As this was the first friend of her husband who had come in her way, his wife regarded the stranger with some curiosity, which, however, was veiled by her quiet manner.

“I am glad to meet a friend of yours, Mr. Craven,” she said, offering her hand.

“I have invited the colonel to supper, and pass the night with us, Mary.”

“I am glad you did so. I will see that a chamber is got ready.”

After she had left the room, Sharpley looked about him approvingly. “On my life, Craven, you are well provided for. This house is decidedly comfortable.”

"It is the best in the village," said Craven, complacently.

"Evidently, your predecessor had taste as well as money. It is a pity that there is a little legal impediment in the way of your permanent enjoyment of all this luxury."

"Hush, hush, Sharpley!" said Mr. Craven, nervously. "You might be heard."

"So I might, and as that would interfere with my plans as well as yours, I will be careful. By the way, that's a good idea making me a colonel. It sounds well—Colonel Sharpley, eh? Let me see. I'll call myself an officer in the English service—served for a while in the East Indies, and for a short period in Canada."

"Whatever you like. But here's my stepson coming in."

"The young man I'm to take charge of. I must ingratiate myself with him."

Here Frank entered the room. He paused when he saw the stranger.

"Frank," said Mr. Craven, "this is my friend, Colonel Sharpley. I believe you have already made his acquaintance."

"Yes, sir, I saw him this morning."

"I didn't suspect when I first spoke to you that you were related to my old friend, Craven," said Sharpley, smiling.

Mr. Sharpley was a man not overburdened—in fact, not burdened at all—with principle, but he could make himself personally more agreeable than Mr. Craven, nor did Frank feel for him the instinctive aversion which he entertained for his step-father. The stranger had drifted about the world, and, being naturally intelligent and observing, he had accumulated a fund of information which enabled him to make himself agreeable to those who were unacquainted with his real character. He laid himself out now to entertain Frank.

"Ah, my young friend," he said, "how I envy you your youth and hope. I am an old, battered man of the world, who has been everywhere, seen a great deal, and yet, in all the wide world, I am without a home."

"Have you traveled much, sir," asked Frank.

"I have been in Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Australia," answered Sharpley.

"Yes, Botany Bay," thought Craven, but it was not his cue to insinuate suspicions of his friend.

"How much you must have seen!" said Frank, interested.

"You're right; I've seen a great deal."

"Have you ever been in Switzerland?"

"Yes, I've clambered about among the Alps. I tried to ascend Mont Blanc, but had not endurance enough."

Frank was interested. He had read books of travels, and he had dreamed of visiting foreign lands. He had thought more than once how much he should enjoy roaming about in countries beyond the sea, but he had never, in his quiet country home, even met one who had made this journey, and he eagerly listened to what Colonel Sharpley had to tell him about these distant lands.

Here supper was announced, and the four sat down.

"Do you take your tea strong, Colonel Sharpley?" asked Mrs. Craven.

"As strong as you can make it. Tea is a

favorite drink of mine. I have drunk it in its native land—in fact, everywhere.”

“Have you been in China, Colonel Sharp-ley?”

“Yes, madam. I spent three months there—learned to talk broken China a little,” he added, with a laugh. “Yes, Mrs. Craven, I have been a rover.”

“He has been telling me about Switzerland, mother,” said Frank, eagerly. “How splendid it must be to travel there.”

“I am going back to Europe in three or four weeks,” said Sharp-ley, ready now to spring his trap. “Were you ever there, Mrs. Craven?”

“No, sir; I am timid about traveling.”

“I was going to ask why you and my friend Craven didn’t pull up stakes and go abroad for a time?”

“I am afraid I am getting too old to travel, Colonel Sharp-ley.”

“Old! my dear madam? Why you’re in the prime of life. If you are getting old, what shall I say about myself?”

“I suppose I am not quite venerable,” said

Mrs. Craven, smiling, "but I should shrink from the voyage."

"I may persuade her to go some time," said Mr. Craven, with a glance at his wife. "Just now it would be a little inconvenient for me to leave my business."

"I fancy this young man would like to go," said Sharpley, turning to Frank.

"Indeed I should," said Frank, eagerly. "There is nothing in the world I should like better."

"Come, I have an idea to propose," said Sharpley, as if it had struck him; "if you'll let him go with me, I will look after him, and at the end of three months, or any other period you may name, I will put him on board a steamer bound for New York. It will do him an immense deal of good."

Mrs. Craven was startled by the suddenness of the proposal.

"How could he come home alone?" she said.

"He couldn't leave the steamer till it reached New York, and I am sure he could find his way home from there, or you could meet him at the steamer."

"Oh, mother, let me go!" said Frank, all on fire with the idea.

"It would seem lonely without you, Frank."

"I would write twice—three times a week, and I should have ever so much to tell you after I got home."

"What do you think, Mr. Craven?" asked his wife, hesitatingly.

"I think it a very good plan, Mary, but, as you know, I don't wish to interfere with your management of Frank. If you say yes, I have no sort of objection."

Just at that moment Frank felt more kindly toward Mr. Craven than he had ever done before. He could not, of course, penetrate the treachery which he meditated.

"I hardly know what to say. Do you think there would be any danger?"

"I have great confidence in my friend, Colonel Sharpley. He is an experienced traveler—has been everywhere, as he has told you. I really wish I could go myself in the party."

This Frank did not wish, though he would prefer to go with Mr. Craven rather than stay at home.

"Would it not interrupt his studies?" asked his mother, as a final objection.

"Summer is near at hand, and he would have a vacation at any rate. He will probably study all the better after he returns."

"That I will," said Frank.

"Then, if you really think it best, I will consent," said Mrs. Craven.

Frank was so overjoyed that he jumped from his chair and threw his arms around his mother's neck. A flush of pleasure came to her cheek, and she felt repaid for the sacrifice she must make of Frank's society. She knew beforehand that her husband's company would not go far toward compensating that.

"I congratulate you, my young friend," said Colonel Sharpley (for we may as well address him by his stolen title), "upon the pleasure before you."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir, for being willing to take so much trouble on my account."

"No need of thanks on that score. The fact is, I shall enjoy the trip all the more

in watching your enjoyment. I am rather *blase* myself, but it will be a treat to me to see what impressions foreign scenes make on you."

"How soon do you go, sir?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"Let me see; this is the fifth. I will engage passage for the nineteenth—that is, if you can get ready at such short notice."

"No fear of that," said Frank, confidently.

"He'll be on hand promptly, you may be sure," said Mr. Craven, smiling. "Really, Frank, we shall miss you very much."

"Thank you, sir," said Frank, feeling almost cordial to his step-father; "but it won't be long, and I shall write home regularly."

During the evening Frank kept Sharpley busy telling him about foreign parts. Mr. Craven listened, with a crafty smile, watching him as a spider does an entangled fly.

"He's trapped!" he said to himself.

Poor Frank! How little could he read of the future!

CHAPTER XII.

TWO BOY FRIENDS.

“GOING to Europe, Frank!” repeated his friend, Ben Cameron, in unbounded astonishment. “I can hardly believe it.”

“I can hardly believe it myself; but it’s true.”

“How did it come about?”

“Colonel Sharpley, Mr. Craven’s friend, is going, and offered to take me.”

“Didn’t Mr. Craven object?”

“No; why should he? He thought it was a good plan.”

“And your mother?”

“She was a little afraid at first that something might happen to me; but, as Colonel Sharpley and Mr. Craven were in favor of it, she yielded.”

"Well, Frank, all I can say is, that I wish I were in your shoes."

"I wish you were going with me, Ben. Wouldn't it be jolly?"

"Unfortunately, Frank, I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth, like you. You are the son of rich parents, while my father is a poor carpenter, working by the day."

"I like you as much as if you were worth half a million, Ben."

"I know you do, Frank; but that doesn't give me the half-million. I must postpone going to Europe till I have earned money enough with my own hands."

"Don't be too sure of that, Ben."

"What do you mean, Frank?"

"I mean this, that when I am twenty-one I come into possession of about forty thousand dollars. Now, the interest on that is two thousand four hundred. I'll invite you to go abroad with me, and spend a year there. If the interest isn't enough to pay our expenses, I will take a few hundred dollars of the principal."

"That's a generous offer, Frank," said Ben;

"but you don't consider that at that time I shall be a journeyman carpenter, very likely, while you will be a young gentleman, just graduated from college. You may not want such company then."

"My dear Ben," said Frank, laying his hand affectionately on the other's shoulder, "if you think I'm a snob or likely to become one, say so at once; but I hope you think better of me than to believe that I will ever be ashamed of my dearest friend, even if he is a journeyman carpenter. I should despise myself if I thought such a thing possible."

"Then I won't think so, Frank."

"That's right, Ben. We'll be friends for life, or, if we are not, it shall be your fault, not mine. But there's one favor I am going to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"That while I am gone you will call round often and see mother. She will miss me a great deal, for I have always been with her, and it will be a pleasure to her to see you, whom she knows to be my dearest friend, and talk with you about me. Will you go?"

"Certainly I will, Frank, if you think she would like to have me."

"I know she would. You see, Ben, though Mr. Craven and my mother get along well enough, I am sure she doesn't love him. He may be a fair sort of man, and I am bound to say that I have no fault to find with him, but I don't think she finds a great deal of pleasure in his society. Of course, Ben, you won't repeat this?"

"Certainly not."

"And you will call often?"

"Yes, Frank."

"I will tell mother so. Then I shall leave home with a light heart. Just think of it, Ben—it's now the sixth of the month, and on the nineteenth I sail. I wish it were to-morrow."

"It will soon be here, Frank."

"Yes, I know it. I am afraid I can't fix my mind on my studies much for the next week or so. I shall be thinking of Europe all the time."

Meanwhile, Mr. Craven and Colonel Sharp-
ley, in the office of the former, were discussing
the same subject.

"So we have succeeded, Craven," said Sharpley, taking out a cigar and beginning to smoke.

Yes, you managed it quite cleverly."

"Neither Mrs. Craven nor the boy will suspect that you are particularly interested in getting him out of the country."

"No," said Craven, complacently; "I believe I scored a point in my favor with the boy by favoring the project. Had I opposed it, his mother would not have consented, and he knows it."

"Yes, that is well. It will avert suspicion hereafter. Now there is an important point to be considered. What funds are you going to place in my hands to start with?"

"How much shall you need?"

"Well, you must supply me with money at once to pay for tickets—say two hundred and fifty dollars, and a bill of exchange for a thousand dollars, to begin with. More can be sent afterward."

"I hope you won't be too extravagant, Sharpley," said Mr. Craven, a little uneasily.

"Extravagant! Why, zounds, man, two persons can't travel for nothing. Besides, the money doesn't come out of your purse; it comes out of the boy's fortune."

"If I draw too much, his mother, who is his guardian, will be startled."

"Then draw part from her funds. You have the control of those."

"I don't know as I have a right to."

"Pooh, man, get over your ridiculous scruples. I know your real reason. You look upon her money as yours, and don't like to part with any of it. But just consider, if things turn out as we expect, you will shortly get possession of the boy's forty thousand dollars, and can then pay yourself. Don't you see it?"

"Perhaps the boy may return in safety," suggested Craven. "In that case our plans are all dished."

"Don't be afraid of that," said Sharpley, with wicked significance. "I will take care of that."

"It shall be as you say, then," said Craven. "You shall have two hundred dollars for the

purchase of tickets and a bill of exchange for a thousand."

"You may as well say three hundred, Craven, as there will be some extra preliminary expenses, and you had better give me the money now, as I am going up to the city this morning to procure tickets."

"Very well, three hundred let it be."

"And there's another point to be settled, a very important one, and we may as well settle it now."

"What is it?"

"How much am I to receive in case our plans work well?"

"How much?" repeated Craven, hesitatingly.

"Yes, how much?"

"Well, say two thousand dollars."

"Two thousand devils!" exclaimed Sharp-ley, indignantly. "Why, Craven, you must take me for a fool."

Mr. Craven hastily disclaimed this imputation.

"You expect me to do your dirty work for any such paltry sum as that! No! I don't sell myself so cheap."

"Two thousand dollars is a good deal of money."

"Not for such services as that, especially as it leaves you nineteen times as much. Craven, it won't do!"

"Say five thousand dollars, then!" said Craven, reluctantly.

"That's a little more like the figure, but it isn't enough."

"What will satisfy you, then?"

"Ten thousand."

"Ten thousand!" repeated Craven, in dismay.

"Yes, ten thousand," said Sharpley, firmly.
"Not a cent less."

Mr. Craven expostulated, but his expostulations were all in vain. His companion felt that he had him in his power, and was not disposed to abate his demands. Finally the agreement was made.

"Shall it be in writing, Craven?" asked Sharpley, jocosely.

"No, no."

"I didn't know but you might want to bind me. When does the train leave for New York?"

"In an hour."

"Then I'll trouble you to look up three hundred dollars for me, and I'll take it."

By the ten o'clock train Colonel Sharpley was a passenger. Mr. Craven saw him off, and then returned thoughtfully to his office.

"It's a bold plan," thus he soliloquized; "but I think it will succeed. If it does, I shall no longer be dependent upon the will or caprice of my wife. I shall be my own master, and possessed of an abundant fortune."

"If only Sharpley and the boy could die together, it would be a great relief. While that man lives I shall not feel wholly safe. However, one at a time. Let the boy be got out of the way, and I will see what can be done for the other. The cards are in my favor, and if I play a crafty game, I shall win in the end."

CHAPTER XIII.

JONATHAN TARBOX, OF SQUASHBORO'.

A GREAT steamer was plowing its way through the Atlantic waves. Fifteen hundred miles were traversed, and nearly the same remained to be crossed. The sea had been rough in consequence of a storm, and even now there was considerable motion. A few passengers were on deck, among them our young hero, who felt better in the open air than in the closer atmosphere below; besides, he admired the grandeur of the sea, spreading out on all sides of him, farther than his eyes could reach. He had got over his first sadness at parting with his mother, and he was now looking forward with the most eager anticipation to setting foot upon European soil.

He shared a state-room with Sharpley, but the latter spent little time in the boy's company. He had discovered some congenial

company among the other passengers, and spent most of the time smoking with them or playing cards below. Frank did not miss him much, as he found plenty to engage his attention on board.

As he stood looking out on the wild waste of waters, trying to see if anywhere he could discover another vessel, he was aroused by the salutation :

“I say, you boy !”

Looking around, he saw a tall, thin man, dressed in a blue swallow-tail coat with brass buttons, a high standing dickey, and pants three or four inches too short in the legs. He was an admirable specimen of the Yankee—as he is represented on the stage—an exceptional specimen, though some of our foreign friends may regard him as the rule. It was not the first time Frank had seen him. Two or three times he had appeared at the table; but he had been stricken with seasickness, and for the greater part of the voyage thus far had remained in his state-room.

“Good morning, sir,” said Frank, politely.
“You have been seasick, haven’t you ?”

"Seasick! I guess I have," returned the other, energetically. "I thought I was goin' to kick the bucket more'n once."

"It is not a very agreeable feeling," said Frank.

"I guess not. If I'd known what kind of a time I was a-goin' to have, I wouldn't have left Squashboro', you bet!"

"Are you from Squashboro'?" asked Frank, amused.

"Yes, I'm from Squashboro', State of Maine, and I wish I was there just now, I tell you."

"You won't feel so when you get on the other side," said Frank, consolingly.

"Well, may be not; but I tell you, boy, it feels kinder risky bein' out here on the mill-pond with nothin' but a plank between you and drownin'. I guess I wouldn't make a very good sailor."

"Are you going to travel much?" asked Frank.

"Wal, you see, I go mostly on business. My name's Jonathan Tarbox. My father's name is Elnathan Tarbox. He's got a nice

farm in Squashboro', next to old Deacon Perkins'. Was you ever in Squashboro'?"

"No; I think not."

"It's a thrivin' place, is Squashboro'. Wal, now, I guess you are wonderin' what sets me out to go to Europe, ain't you?"

"I suppose you want to see the country, Mr. Tarbox."

"Ef that was all, you wouldn't catch me goin' over and spendin' a heap of money, all for nothin'. That ain't business."

"Then I suppose you go on business?"

"I guess I do. You see I've invented a new plow, that, I guess, is goin' to take the shine off of any other that's in use, and it kinder struck me that ef I should take it to the Paris Exhibition, I might, may be, make somethin' out of it. I've heerd that they're a good deal behind in farm tools in the old European countries, and I guess I'll open their eyes a little with my plow."

"I hope you'll succeed, Mr. Tarbox," said Frank, politely.

"I guess I shall. You see, I've risked considerable money onto it—that is, in trav-

elin' expenses and such like. You see, my Uncle Abner—he wasn't my real uncle, that is, by blood, but he was the husband of my Aunt Matilda, my mother's oldest sister—didn't have no children of his own, so he left me two thousand dollars in his will."

Mr. Tarbox paused in order to see what effect the mention of this great inheritance would have upon his auditor.

"Indeed you were lucky, Mr. Tarbox," said Frank.

"I guess I felt tickled when I heard of it. I jist kicked like a two-year-old colt. Wal, now, dad wanted me to buy a thirty-acre farm that was for sale about half a mile from his'n, but I wouldn't. I'd about fetch'd my plow out right, and I wa'n't goin' to settle down on no two-thousand-dollar farm. Catch me! No; I heerd of this Paris Exhibition, and I vowed I'd come out here and see what could be did. So here I am. I ain't sorry I cum, though I was about sick enough to die. Thought I should a-turned inside out one night when the vessel was goin' every which way."

"I was sick myself that night," said Frank.

Mr. Tarbox having now communicated all his own business, naturally felt a degree of curiosity about that of his young companion.

"Are you goin' to the Paris Exhibition?" he asked.

"I suppose so. It depends upon Colonel Sharpley."

"The man you're travelin' with? Yes; I saw him at the table—tall man, black hair, and slim, ain't he?"

"Yes, sir."

"So he's a colonel, is he?"

"Yes."

"Did he fight in any of our wars?"

"No, he's an Englishman."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Tarbox, with a slight contempt in his voice. "He wouldn't be no match for an American officer."

"I don't know," said Frank.

"Wal, I do—the Yankees always could whip any other nation, not but the colonel seems a respectable man, though he's a foreigner."

"It is we who will be foreigners when we get to England," said Frank.

This aroused the controversial spirit of Mr. Tarbox.

"Do you mean to say that you and me will turn to furriners?" he asked, indignantly.

"We shall be foreigners in England."

"No, we won't," said Jonathan, energetically. "At any rate, I won't. I shall always be a free-born American citizen, and a free-born American citizen can't be a furriner."

"Not in America, Mr. Tarbox, but in England, I am saying."

"A free-born American citizen ain't a furriner anywhere," said Mr. Tarbox, emphatically.

Frank was amused, but felt it wise to discontinue the discussion.

"Are you goin' to Europe on business?" inquired the other.

"No, only for pleasure."

"Sho! I guess you must have a considerable pile of money!" suggested Mr. Tarbox, inquiringly.

"I have a little money," said Frank, modestly.

"Left you?"

"Yes, by my father."

"Wal, so you're in luck, too. Is the colonel related to you?"

"No. He is a friend of my step-father."

"Sho! So your mother married again. How long are you going to stay on the other side?"

"Only three or four months, I think."

"Do you know how much they ask for board in Paris?" asked Jonathan, with considerable interest.

"No, Mr. Tarbox, I have no idea. I suppose it's according to what kind of rooms and board you take."

"Wal, you see, Mr.—what did you say your name was?"

"Hunter."

"I once knowed a Hunter—I think he was took up for stealing."

"I don't think he was any relation of mine, Mr. Tarbox."

"Likely not. What was I a-goin' to say?"

Oh, Mr. Hunter, I ain't very particular about my fodder. I don't mind havin' baked beans half the time—pork and beans—and you know them are cheap."

"So I've heard."

"And as to a room, I don't mind it's bein' fixed up with fiddle-de-dee work and sich. Ef it's only comfortable—that'll suit me."

"Then I think you'll be able to get along cheap, Mr. Tarbox."

"That's what I calc'late. Likely I'll see you over there. What's that bell for?"

"Lunch."

"Let's go down. Fact is, I've been so tarnal sea-sick I'm empty as a well-bucket dried in the sun. I guess I can eat to-day."

They went down to the saloon, and Mr. Tarbox's prophecy was verified. He shoveled in the food with great energy, and did considerable toward making up for past deficiencies. Frank looked on amused. He was rather inclined to like his countryman, though he acknowledged him to be very deficient in polish and refinement.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LONDON CLERK.

JONATHAN TARBOX seemed to have taken a fancy to our hero, for immediately after lunch he followed him on deck.

"I want to show you a drawin' of my plow, Mr. Hunter," he said.

"I should like to see it, Mr. Tarbox, but I am no judge of such things."

Mr. Tarbox drew a paper from his coat-pocket containing a sketch of his invention. He entered into a voluble explanation of it, to which Frank listened good-naturedly, though without much comprehension.

"Do you think it'll work?" asked the inventor.

"I should think it might, Mr. Tarbox, but then I don't know much about such things."

"I don't believe they've got anything in Europe that'll come up to it," said Mr. Tar-

box, complacently. "Ef I can get it introduced into England and France, it'll pay me handsome."

"Have you shown it to any Englishman yet?"

"No, I haven't. I don't know any."

"There are some on board this steamer."

"Are there? Where?"

"There's one."

Frank pointed out a young man with weak eyes and auburn hair, a London clerk, who visited the United States on a business errand, and was now returning. He was at this moment standing on deck, with his arms folded, looking out to sea.

"I guess I'll go and speak to him," said Mr. Tarbox. "May be he can help me introduce my plow in London."

Frank watched with some amusement the interview between Mr. Tarbox and the London clerk, which he shrewdly suspected was not likely to lead to any satisfactory results.

Mr. Tarbox approached the Englishman from behind, and unceremoniously slapped him on the back.

The clerk whirled round suddenly and surveyed Mr. Tarbox with mingled surprise and indignation.

"What did you say?" he inquired.

"How are you, old hoss?"

"Do you mean to call me a 'oss?"

"No, I call you a hoss. How do you feel?"

"I don't feel any better for your hitting me on the back, sir," said the clerk, angrily.

"Sho! your back must be weak. Been sea-sick?"

"I have suffered some from sea-sickness," returned the person addressed, with an air of restraint.

"So have I. I tell you I thought something was goin' to cave in."

"Of what earthly interest does he suppose that is to me?" thought the clerk, superciliously.

"Fact is," continued Mr. Tarbox, "I'd a good deal rather be to home in Squashboro', livin' on baked beans, than be here livin' on all their chicken fixin's. I suppose you've heard of Squashboro' hain't you?"

"I can't say I have," said the clerk, coldly, adjusting his eye-glasses, and turning away from his uncongenial companion.

"Squashboro', State o' Maine. It's a pooty smart place—got three stores, a blacksmith's shop, a grist mill, and two meetin'-houses."

"Really, my friend," said the Englishman, "Squashboro' may be as smart a place as you say, but it doesn't interest me."

"Don't it? That's because you haven't been there. We've got some smart men in Squashboro'."

"You don't say so?" said the other, in a sarcastic tone.

"There's Squire Perkins, selectman, town clerk and auctioneer. You'd ought to hear his tongue go when he auctions. Then there's Parson Pratt—knows a sight of Latin, Greek and Hebrew."

"Are you one of the smart men of Squashboro'?" asked the clerk, in the same tone.

"Wal, that ain't for me to say," answered Mr. Tarbox, modestly. "You never can tell what may happen, as the hen said when she

hatched a lot of geese. But I'll tell you what, Mr. Englishman—"

"My name is Robinson," interrupted the other, stiffly.

"Why, howdy do, Mr. Robinson!" exclaimed Jonathan, seizing the unwilling hand of the other and shaking it vigorously. "My name is Tarbox—Jonathan Tarbox, named after my grandfather. His name was Jonathan, too."

"Really, your family history is very interesting."

"Glad you think so. But as I was sayin', when you spoke about me bein' smart, I've got up a new plow that's goin' to take the shine off all that's goin'," and he plunged his hand into his pocket.

"You don't carry a plow round in your pocket, do you?" asked Mr. Robinson, arching his eyebrows.

"Come, now, Mr. Robinson, that's a good joke for you. I've got a plan of it here on this piece of paper. If you'll squat down somewhere, I'll explain it to you."

"I prefer standing, Mr.—Mr. Tarbarrel."

"Tarbox is my name."

"Ah—Tarbox, then. No great difference."

"You see, Mr. Robberson—"

"Robinson, sir."

"Ah—is it?" said Jonathan, innocently.
"No great difference."

Mr. Robinson looked suspicious, but the expression of his companion's face was unchanged, and betrayed no malice prepense.

"I don't know anything about plows," said the clerk, coldly. "You'd better show it to somebody else—I never saw a plow in my life."

"Never saw a plow!" ejaculated Jonathan, in the utmost surprise. "Why, where have you been livin' all your life?"

"In London."

"And don't they have plows in the stores?"

"I suppose they may, but they're not in my line."

"Why, I knowed a plow as soon as I could walk," said Mr. Tarbox.

"I leave such things to laborers," said Mr.

Robinson, superciliously. "I feel no interest in them."

"Ain't you a laborer yourself?" asked Jonathan.

"I—a laborer!" exclaimed Mr. Robinson, with natural indignation. "Do you mean to insult me?"

"I never insult nobody. But don't you work for a livin'? That's what I mean."

"I am engaged in trade," answered the clerk, haughtily.

"Then you do work for a livin', and so, of course, you're a laborer."

"Sir, men in my business are not laborers—they are merchants."

"What's the difference?"

"I perceive, sir, that you are not accustomed to society. I excuse you on account of your ignorance."

"Ignorance! What do you mean by that?" demanded Mr. Tarbox, in his turn indignant.

Jonathan looked threatening, and as he was physically the Englishman's superior, the latter answered hastily:

"I only meant to say that you were not versed in the requirements and conventionalities of society."

"Is that English?" asked Jonathan, with a puzzled look.

"I believe so."

"Well, I never heard sich jawbreakers before, but, if it's an apology, it's all right. Won't you look at the plow, then?"

"It would be of no use, Mr. Tarbox—I don't know about such things, I assure you. You had better show it to somebody else. My life has been passed in London, and I really am profoundly ignorant of agricultural implements."

As he spoke, he turned away and walked down stairs. Mr. Tarbox followed him with his eyes, ejaculating:

"That's a queer critter. He's over thirty years old, I guess, and he's never sot eyes on a plow! He'd ought to be ashamed of his ignorance."

"Well, Mr. Tarbox," said Frank, when his new friend rejoined him, "did you explain your new invention to the Englishman?"

"I was goin' to, but he said he never seed one in the whole course of his life, and didn't take no interest in them. What do you think of that?"

"He can't have been in the country much, I should think."

"He keeps store in London, he says; but he's a poor, ignorant creetur, and he don't want to learn. I wanted to explain all about my invention, but he wouldn't look at it."

"There are other Englishmen who will take more interest in it, Mr. Tarbox—men who live in the country and cultivate the land."

"I hope so. I hope they ain't all as ignorant as that creetur. Do you think that colonel that you're travelin' with would like to look at it?"

"I don't believe he would, Mr. Tarbox. I don't know much about him, but he seems to me like a man that has always lived in the city."

"Just as you say. I'd just as lief explain it to him."

"Are you going to put it in the exhibition?"

"Yes; I've got it packed in my trunk in pieces. I'm going to put it together on the other side, and take it along with me."

This was not the last conversation Frank had with Mr. Tarbox. He always listened with sympathy to the recital of the other's plans and purposes, and Jonathan showed a marked predilection for the society of our young hero. Without knowing it, Frank was making a friend who would be of value in the future.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. TARBOX IS OBSTINATE

EARLY on Wednesday morning, eleven days from the date of sailing, the good steamer which bore our hero as passenger, steamed into the harbor of Liverpool. As may readily be supposed, Frank was on deck, gazing with eager expectation at the great city before him, with its solid docks, and the indications of its wide-spreading commerce.

"Well, Frank, we are almost there," said Colonel Sharpley.

"Yes, sir. Isn't it glorious!" exclaimed our hero, with enthusiasm.

"I don't see anything glorious," said a voice at his side.

The speaker was Mr. Tarbox, of Squashboro', State o' Maine.

"Don't you like it, Mr. Tarbox?" asked Frank.

"Liverpool ain't a circumstance to New York," said the Yankee, with patriotic pride. "New York's bigger and finer than this town ever will see."

"I don't care whether it's bigger or not," said Frank. "It's jolly being here. What a splendid time I mean to have."

"Enjoy yourself while you may," said Sharpley to himself. "Your time is short."

"What tavern are you goin' to put up at?" asked Mr. Tarbox.

"I don't know," said Frank. "Perhaps Colonel Sharpley can tell you."

Sharpley turned around, and looked at the Yankee superciliously.

"I really have not decided," he said.

"I thought I'd like to put up at the same," said Mr. Tarbox, "seein' as I know you. May be we might ride in the same carriage to the tavern."

"I prefer not to add to my party, sir," said Colonel Sharpley, frigidly.

"Oh, you needn't flare up," said Jonathan Tarbox, coolly. "I'm willin' to pay my share of the bill."

"I must decline making any arrangement with you, sir," said Sharpley as he moved away.

"Kinder offish, ain't he?" said Mr. Tarbox, addressing Frank.

"He seems a little so," said Frank; "but I hope, Mr. Tarbox, you won't think I am unwilling to be in your company."

"No, I don't," said the Yankee, cordially. "You ain't a bit stuck up. I'd like to let that chap know that I'm as good as he is, if he does call himself colonel."

"No doubt of it."

"And if I can only make my plow go, I'll be rich some day."

"I hope you will, Mr. Tarbox."

"So do I. Do you know what I'll do then?"

"What?"

"You see, there's a gal in our town; her name is Sally Sprague, and she's about the nicest gal I ever sot eyes on. Ef things goes well with me, that gal will have a chance to be Mrs. Tarbox," said Jonathan, energetically.

"I hope she will," said Frank, in amused sympathy.

"I like you—I do!" said Mr. Tarbox "Ef ever I git a chance to do you a good turn, I'll do it."

"Thank you, Mr. Tarbox. I am sorry Colonel Sharpley was rude to you."

"I can stand it," said Jonathan; "and I mean to go to the same tavern, too."

The custom-house officials came on board and examined the luggage. This over, the passengers were permitted to land. On shore they encountered a crowd of hackmen.

"To the St. George Hotel," said Colonel Sharpley, selecting one of the number. "Here, Frank, get in."

Just behind was Mr. Tarbox, standing guard over a dilapidated trunk and a green chest, the latter of which contained his precious plow.

"Have a cab, sir?" asked a short, stout hackman.

"What are you goin' to charge?" asked Jonathan.

"Where do you want me to drive, sir?"

"St. George Tavern. Oh, stop a minute. Do they pile up the prices steep there?"

"It's reasonable, sir."

"That's all I want. I ain't goin' to pay no fancy prices. How much are you goin' to charge for carryin' me there?"

"Half a crown, sir."

"What in thunder's half a crown?"

"Ain't he precious green?" thought cabby. But he answered, respectfully:

"It's two-and-six, sir."

"Two dollars and six cents?"

"No, sir; two shillin's and sixpence."

"It's too much."

"Reg'lar price."

"I don't believe it. Here, you other chap," beckoning to another cabman, "what'll you charge to take me to the St. George Tavern?"

This brought the first cabby to terms.

"Jump in, sir. I'll take you round for two shillin's," he said.

"All right," said Jonathan. "I'll help you with that chist. Now put her over the road. I'm hungry, and want some vittles."

Five minutes after Frank arrived at the St. George with his guardian, Mr. Tarbox drove up, bag and baggage.

"You see I'm here most as soon as you," said Tarbox, nodding. "We ain't separated yet. It's a pooty nice tavern, Mr. Sharpley," accosting Frank's guardian with easy forgetfulness of the latter's repellant manner.

"What is your object in following us, sir?" asked Sharpley, frigidly.

"You haven't engaged this tavern all to yourself, have you?" demanded Jonathan. "Ain't it free to other travelers?"

Sharpley saw the other had him at advantage.

"Didn't you come here because we were here?" he asked.

"May be I did, and then again may be I didn't," the other replied. "There ain't any law ag'in it, is there?"

"I should hardly suppose you would wish to thrust yourself into the society of those who don't want you."

"I won't run up no bills on your account," said Mr. Tarbox; "but I'm goin' just where I please, even if you are there already. Frank here ain't no way troubled about it."

"Frank, as you call him, is under my

guardianship," said Mr. Sharpley, with a sneer. "I don't wish him to associate with improper persons."

"Do you call me an improper person?" demanded Mr. Tarbox, offended.

"You can draw your own inferences, Mr. —I really don't know who."

"Tarbox, of Squashboro', State o' Maine."

"Then, Mr. Tarbox, of Squashboro', State o' Maine, I have already wasted as much time as I choose to do on you, and must close the conversation."

"All right, sir. You'd better shut up Frank in a glass case, if you don't want him to associate with any improper persons."

But Colonel Sharpley had turned on his heel and moved away.

"I can't have that fellow following us everywhere," he said to himself. "The task I have before me is one which demands secrecy, in order to avert all suspicion in case anything happens. This inquisitive, prying Yankee may spoil all. He won't take a hint, and I suspect it would be dangerous to try a kick. The trouble with these Yankees is

that they are afraid of nothing, and are bent on carrying out their own purposes, however disagreeable to others. I must ask Frank about this fellow and his plans."

"Frank," he commenced, when they were alone, "I must congratulate you on this Yankee friend of yours. He has fastened on us like a leech."

"He is a good-natured fellow," said Frank.

"He is an impudent scoundrel!" said Sharpley, impatiently.

"Not so bad as that. He is not used to the ways of the world, and he seems to have taken a fancy to me."

"He ought to see that his company's not wanted."

"He is not disagreeable to me. I am rather amused by his odd ways and talk."

"I am not. He is confoundedly disagreeable to me. We must shake him off. We can't have him following us all over Europe."

"He won't do that. He is going to the Paris Exposition."

"What's he going to do there—exhibit himself?"

"Not exactly," said Frank, good humoredly. "He's invented a plow that will take the shine off all others, so he says. So he will be detained there for some time."

"I am glad to hear that; but I mean to get rid of him beforehand. When we leave here we mustn't tell where we are going."

"I can't," answered Frank; "for I don't know, unless it is to London."

"Then I won't tell you, or you might let it out accidentally."

Meanwhile, Jonathan, who had ordered a couple of chops, was sitting in the coffee-room, making a vigorous onslaught upon them.

"I wonder what makes that Sharpley so skittish about me and Frank bein' together?" he thought. "He needn't think I want to stick near him. I wouldn't give half a cent for his company. But that boy's a good sort of a chap and a gentleman. I'll keep him in sight if I can."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN ADVENTURE IN LONDON.

THE next day Sharpley took advantage of Mr. Tarbox's temporary absence from the hotel to hurry Frank off to the London train.

"I hope we have seen the last of that intrusive Yankee," said Sharpley to our hero, when they were fairly installed in the railway carriage.

"I should like to have bidden him good-by," said Frank.

"You can associate with him as much as you like after we have parted company," said Sharpley. "But, for my part, I don't want to see anything of him."

"I wonder what makes him so prejudiced," thought Frank. "It can't be because he is a Yankee, for I am a Yankee, myself, and yet he takes the trouble of looking after me."

Sharpley was not very social. He bought a paper, and spent most of the time in reading.

But Frank did not find the time hang heavily upon his hands. He was in England, that was his glad thought. On either side, as the train sped along, was spread out a beautiful English landscape, and his eyes were never tired of watching it.

To Sharpley there was no novelty in the scene. He had enough to think of in his past life—enough to occupy his mind in planning how to carry out his present wicked designs upon the life of the innocent boy at his side.

At last they reached London, and drove in a hansom to a quiet hotel, located in one of the streets leading from the Strand, a business thoroughfare well known to all who have ever visited the great metropolis.

“How long are we going to stay in London, Colonel Sharpley?” asked Frank.

“Two or three days. I can’t tell exactly how long.”

“That will be rather a short time to see so

large a city," returned Frank, considerably disappointed.

"I am in a hurry to go to the continent," was the reply. "We can stop here longer on our return."

With this Frank was forced to be content, though he would have preferred to remain in London long enough now to see the principal objects of interest.

There was, he could not help remarking, a considerable difference in Colonel Sharpley's manner from that which he exhibited when he first called upon his step-father. Then he was very social and agreeable; now he was taciturn, and at times sullen and irritable. Whatever the reason might be, the change was very marked.

"Perhaps he has some business that annoys him," thought Frank, charitably. "I will give him as little trouble as possible. But for his kind offer, I should not have my present chance of seeing foreign countries."

The next morning Sharpley said:

"Frank, you must wander around by yourself, as I have business to attend to."

"All right, sir," said Frank.

In fact, he was rather pleased with the idea of finding his own way in the great city of which he had heard so much, and which he had just entered as a stranger. He felt a little like the celebrated explorer, Dr. Livingstone, as he set out to explore a region as new and blind to him as the mysterious tracts of Central Africa to the older traveler. But he had this advantage over the eminent doctor, that, whereas the latter had no maps or charts to guide him, he was able for the small sum of an English shilling, or about twenty-five cents, to obtain a map of London.

When his eye glanced for the first time over the labyrinth, he felt bewildered and lost, but after a short time he made up his mind what course to take, and found his way to Charing Cross, and from thence to Piccadilly, Rupert Street, and the parks.

Time flew by, and in the delight of the ever-recurring novelty, he found that it was two o'clock.

He stepped into a pastry-cook's to get some lunch.

Then he hailed a passing stage, and rode a long distance, but whether he was near or far from his hotel he could not tell.

He decided to leave the stage, and inquire in some shop near by where he was, and then, by examining his map, ascertain the most direct course to his hotel.

As he reached the sidewalk, a little girl of ten years, apparently, with a thin, sad face, fixed her eyes upon him. She said nothing, but there was a mute appeal in her look which Frank, who was by nature compassionate, could not resist.

"What is the matter, little girl?" he asked.

"Mother is sick, and we have nothing to eat," answered the little girl, sorrowfully.

"Have you no father?"

"He has gone away."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"Has your mother been sick long?"

"She made herself sick working so hard to buy us bread."

"Then you are not the only child," inquired Frank.

"I have a little sister, four years old."

"How old are you?"

"I am ten."

"What is your name?"

"Alice Craven."

The announcement of her name made Frank start.

"What!" he exclaimed, for, except his step-father, he had never till now met anyone by that name.

"Alice Craven," answered the little girl, supposing he had not understood aright.

"Where does your mother live?" asked Frank.

"In Hurst court."

"Is it far from here?"

"Only about five minutes' walk."

"I will go with you," said Frank, with sudden resolution, "and if I find your mother is as badly off as you say, I will give you something."

"Come, then, sir; I will show you the way."

Frank followed the little girl till he found himself in a miserable court, shut in by wretched tenements. Alice entered one of the

dirtiest of these, and Frank followed her up a rickety staircase to the fourth floor. Here, his guide opened a door and led the way into a dark room, almost bare of furniture, where, upon a bed in the corner, lay a wan, attenuated woman. Beside her sat the little girl of four to whom Alice had referred.

"Mother," said Alice, "here is a kind young gentleman, who has come to help us."

"Heaven bless him!" said the woman, feebly. "We are in dire want of help."

"How long have you been sick?" asked Frank, compassionately.

"It is long since I have been well," answered the invalid, "but I have been able to work till two weeks since. For two weeks I have earned nothing, and, but for the neighbors, I and my two poor children would have starved."

"Is your husband dead?"

"I do not know. He left me three years ago, and I have never seen him since."

"Did he desert you?" asked Frank, indignantly. "Did he leave you to shift for yourself?"

"He promised to come back, but he has never come," said the woman, sighing.

"Your little girl tells me your name is Craven."

"Yes, sir. That is my husband's name."

"I know a gentleman by that name."

"Where?" asked the invalid, eagerly.

"In America. But it cannot be your husband," he added, quickly, not caring to excite hope in the poor woman's breast, only to be succeeded by disappointment, "for he has a wife there. I didn't know but it might be your husband's brother."

"My husband had no brother," said the woman, sinking back, her momentary hope extinguished. "Oh, if he only knew how hard it has been for me to struggle for food for these poor children, he would surely come back."

Frank's heart was filled with pity. He drew from his pocket two gold sovereigns, and placed them in the hands of Alice.

"It won't last you long," he said, "but it will give you some relief."

"Bless you, bless you!" said the invalid,

gratefully. "It will keep us till I am well again and can work for my children. What is your name, generous, noble boy?"

"Frank Hunter," said our hero, modestly ; "but don't think too much of what I have done. I shall fare no worse for parting with this money."

"I will remember you in my prayers," said Mrs. Craven. "So young and so generous!"

"Give me your address, Mrs. Craven, and when I am in London again I will come and see you."

"No. 10 Hurst Court," said the invalid.

"I will put it down."

Frank now left the court, and, as it was late, hailed a cab, and was soon set down in front of his hotel.

"Where have you been so long," asked Sharpley. "It is past three o'clock."

"I went about seeing the sights," said Frank. "I saw the parks, and Buckingham Palace, and Regent Street; but I have just left a poor woman who was very destitute, whom I visited in her miserable room. Oddly enough, her name was Craven."

"Craven," repeated Sharpley, his attention at once roused.

"Yes; she had two children, the oldest, Alice, a girl of ten."

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated Sharpley.

Frank looked at him in surprise.

"I daresay they were humbugs," said Sharpley. "Did you give them any money?"

"Two sovereigns; but I am sure they were not humbugs."

"A fool and his money are soon parted," sneered Sharpley. "Where did you find them?"

"No. 10 Hurst Court."

"I advise you not to be so ready to part with your money the next time. I'll wager they are imposters."

"What cursed chance brought him in contact with these people?" said Sharpley to himself after Frank had left him to arrange his toilet. "He little dreams that the woman he has relieved is the true wife of the man who has married his mother."

CHAPTER XVII.

COLONEL SHARPLEY'S RUSE.

LATER in the day Mr. Sharpley found his way to Hurst Court, and paused before Number 10. Though a selfish man, he was not without feeling, and the miserable quarters in which he found his sister excited his pity. He made inquiry of some of the lower tenants, and soon stood at his sister's door. Without waiting to knock, he opened the door and stepped in.

The sick woman looked up mechanically, supposing it to be a neighbor who had been kind to her. But when she recognized her brother, she uttered a feeble cry of joy.

"Oh, Robert, have you come back?" she cried. "How long it is since I have seen you!"

He was shocked at her wan and wasted appearance.

"Helen," he said, taking a seat beside the bed, "you look very sick."

"No, Robert, not very sick. It is only the effect of overwork and scanty food."

"That is enough. How long have you been sick?"

"A fortnight. Things looked very dark for me. I feared my poor children would starve, but this morning a noble boy, whom Providence must have sent to me in my extremity, gave me two sovereigns, and they will last me till I am well. But where have you been, Robert?"

"I have been to America."

"And did you—did you see anything of my husband?" she asked, fixing her eyes anxiously upon him.

"Do you think of him still? He does not deserve it. He has treated you like a scoundrel."

"I know he has not treated me right, Robert, but he is the father of my children. Then you did not find him?"

"I obtained a clew," said Sharpley, evasively. "It may or may not lead to anything."

I am about to leave London now on a journey connected with that clew. If it results in anything, I will let you know."

"Where are you going?"

"On the Continent. I cannot say precisely where, but you will hear from me. But what a hole you are living in," and he looked around him in disgust at the bare walls and naked condition of the miserable room.

"I don't mind it, Robert. I feel glad to have the shelter of any roof."

"Have you been so poor?"

"So poor that I could not well be poorer."

"Come, this must be remedied. I am not rich, but I can do something for you. To-morrow morning I will move you to a better room. Do you think you can bear to be moved?"

"Yes, brother. You are very kind," murmured the sick woman, not aware that her brother's motives were complex, and that his chief reason for the removal was not dictated by sympathy or pity.

"Then I shall be here to-morrow at ten,

with a cab. You must all of you be ready. By the way, do you know any of the people in the house?"

"Yes; they are poor, but some of them have been kind to me."

"Don't let them know where you are moving to?" said Sharpley.

"Not let them know!" repeated Mrs. Craven, in surprise. "Why not?"

"I have a reason, but I don't want to tell you."

"I don't understand it, Robert. What harm can it do?"

Sharpley bit his lip. He was annoyed by her persistency, but he was not prepared to give the real reason. Fortunately, a plausible explanation occurred to him.

"Listen, sister," he said. "You have an enemy."

"An enemy!"

"Yes, who is trying to find you out. He has a clew, and if you remain here he may succeed."

"But how can I have an enemy, and what could he do to me?"

"Suppose he should kidnap one of your children?"

The suggestion was made on the spur of the moment, but the effect was immediate. The poor woman turned pale—paler even than before—and trembled.

"Say no more, Robert," she answered. "I will promise."

"You promise to let no one of your neighbors know where you are going?"

"Yes. But, Robert, is it my husband—is it Mr. Craven who is in search of me?"

"Ask no more," said Sharpley. "You may know some time, but I have told you all I wish you at present to know. But I must be going. To-morrow, at ten, remember."

"I will be ready."

"Cleverly managed!" said Sharpley to himself. "I must take care that that boy does not meet my sister again. The name has already struck him. If he sees her again he may come to suspect the truth, and suspicion once aroused, he may suspect me."

He didn't at once return to the hotel, but going to a part of London two miles distant,

engaged a somewhat better lodging for his sister. The next morning he went to Hurst Court, and, finding her ready, moved her at once to her new home.

"How kind you are, Robert!" she said.

"I would do more if I had the means. I may be richer soon. I have a good prospect before me, but it requires me to go away for a time."

"How long will you be gone?"

"I cannot tell. It may be a month; it may be two or three. I have paid the rent of this lodging for three months in advance. There is the receipt."

She looked at it mechanically, then handed it back.

"This is not the receipt," she said. "The name is wrong."

"How is it wrong?"

"It is made out to Mrs. Chipman."

"It is the right paper."

"But my name is not Mrs. Chipman."

"Yes, it is."

"What do you mean, Robert?" asked his sister, lifting her eyes in surprise.

"Just what I say. I want you to be Mrs. Chipman."

"But why should I give up my name?"

"Do you remember what I told you yesterday—about the man who was on your track?"

"You didn't say it was a man."

"Well, I say so now."

"Well, Robert?"

"He will find it harder to trace you if you change your name."

"If you think it right, Robert, I will be guided by your advice."

"I do think it best for reasons which I cannot fully explain. You must tell your children, also."

"I will do so."

"Have you any of the money that boy gave you?"

"I have nearly all."

"Here are three sovereigns more. With your rent paid for three months, if you use it economically, you will not again be reduced to destitution."

"I shall feel rich with so much money," said Mrs. Craven, smiling faintly.

"Take care that you are not robbed."

"I will be careful. But it seems strange to me that I should have occasion for any fears."

"Before the three months are over, I shall probably be back in London. I will come to you at once, and let you know if I have heard anything."

"Thank you, Robert. Good-by, then, for the present."

"Good-by. I hope you will soon be well."

"I shall. It was anxiety for my children that was wearing upon me. Now, thanks to your kindness, I am easy in mind. But, brother, there is one question I forgot to ask. How came you to know that I lived at Hurst Court?"

Sharpley was posed for a moment, and knew not what to say. He could not, of course, tell the truth; but he was a man fertile in suggestions, and he was silent for a moment only.

"I employed a detective," he answered. "These London detectives are wonderfully sharp. He soon found you out."

"And you took all this trouble about me," said Mrs. Craven, gratefully, not for a moment doubting the accuracy of the story.

"Is it strange that I should take the trouble to find my only sister? But I cannot delay longer. Good-by, Helen."

He stooped and lightly touched her cheek with his lips, and hurried from the room.

"There," he said to himself, after reaching the street; "I have cut off all possibility of a second meeting between Frank and my sister during the brief remainder of our stay in London. When I come back it will be alone!"

Four days afterward they left London for Paris. The day before, Frank made his way again to Hurst Court, meaning to leave a little more money with Mrs. Craven, questioning her at the same time about her husband, whom he could not help connecting in some way with his step-father. But his visit was made in vain. Mrs. Craven had disappeared, and not one of the tenants could say where she had gone; but all agreed that she had

been taken away in a cab by a tall gentleman. It seemed mysterious, but no suspicion as to the identity of the gentleman entered Frank's mind.

"I hope she has found a friend able to help her," he said to himself, and then dismissed the subject from his mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. TARBOX AT THE PARIS EXPOSITION.

“SO this is Paris,” said Frank to himself, as he rode into the court-yard of the Hotel de Rivoli, situated on the fine street of the same name.

He had already, from the carriage window, obtained a good view of the palace of the Tuileries, occupied at that time by Louis Napoleon, in the plenitude of his power, and of the large garden which it faces. The sun was shining brightly, and as he glanced at the signs on either side of the streets through which he passed, he realized, even more clearly than on English soil, that he was in a foreign country.

“What a beautiful city!” he exclaimed, turning to his companion.

“Humph! so, so,” said Sharpley, in a tone quite devoid of enthusiasm.

"I suppose you have been here before, Colonel Sharpley?"

"Often."

"But it is new to me; so I suppose it strikes me more."

"It is always enjoyed best the first time. Can you speak French?"

"A little. I can read the language pretty well. Shall we stay here long?"

"I can't tell yet."

The exhibition was open, and the city was full to overflowing. They were compelled to take rooms high up, the most desirable being already occupied. But for this Frank cared little. He was in Paris; he was going to see its wonders, and this thought filled him with happiness.

The next day they went to the exhibition together, but Colonel Sharpley soon tired of it. After an hour, he turned to Frank, saying:

"Do you want to stay longer?"

"Yes; I have scarcely seen anything yet."

"I suppose you can find your way back to the hotel?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then I will go out. I don't care much for this sort of thing."

So Frank wandered on alone—alone, but surrounded by a crowd of all nationalities, visitors like himself to the great exhibition. On all sides he was surrounded by triumphs of art and skill gathered from all parts of the world.

"I wish I had some friend with me," he thought. "It's a splendid sight, but I should enjoy it better if I had somebody I liked to talk to. Wouldn't it be jolly if Ben Cameron were here! How he would enjoy it! Poor fellow! he's got his own way to make in the world—though I don't know as that is much of a misfortune, after all. I don't think I would mind it, though, of course, it's pleasant to have money."

As these thoughts passed through our hero's mind, he suddenly heard his name called in a loud voice, whose nasal twang could not be mistaken.

Turning in the direction from which it came, his face lighted up with pleasure as he



JONATHAN TARBOX GREETES AN OLD FRIEND.

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recognized his fellow-passenger, Jonathan Tarbox.

The Yankee, looking as countrified as ever in the midst of the brilliant scene, was standing guard over his plow, which had been put together, and was occupying a place assigned it by the Committee of Arrangements.

"Why, Mr. Tarbox, I'm glad to see you!" said Frank, heartily, hurrying through the crowd and offering his hand, which was seized in a tight grip. "How long have you been here?"

"Three days," said Jonathan, "and I'm eenamost tired to death, standin' here, with nobody to talk to."

"I should think you would be lonely. I have only just come. Where are you staying?"

"I put up over to the Latin Quarter," said Mr. Tarbox; "though why they call it Latin, when they don't talk Latin there, I don't know. It's cheap livin' there, and I don't want to spend too much. There was a feller on the cars took me in when I jest come. As I heard him talk English, I asked him if he

could recommend a good, cheap tavern for me to stop at. He told me the best he knew for a cheap one was the Hotel de Villy. So I hired a boy to lead me there. It was a big walk, and when I got there I found the scamp had sent me to the town hall of Paris. I'd like to give him a lickin'! But I met another chap that was more polite, and he directed me to where I am. He lives there himself. He is a poor artist, and I've took the room jest opposite to his. Where are you stoppin'?"

"At the Hotel Rivoli."

"That's a hotel where the big-bugs stop, ain't it—near Lewis Napoleon's house."

"Yes, I believe so," said Frank, smiling; "but I don't claim to be a big-bug."

"That colonel you're traveling with sets up for one. Is he here?"

"He is in the city. He came to the exhibition with me, but he didn't stop long. How do you like Paris, Mr. Tarbox?"

"I really don't know, Frank. The streets and buildin's are pooty handsome, but they do talk the most outlandish stuff I ever heerd.

They rattle off jest like parrots, and I can't understand a word."

"I suppose you have not studied the French language," said Frank, smiling.

"No, and I don't want to. I'd be ashamed o' myself to talk like them. Why in thunder don't they talk English?" asked Jonathan, with an expression of disgust.

"I suppose they wonder that Americans don't speak French."

"Why, they do say that young ones call their mothers a mare," continued Mr. Tarbox. "That's what I call sassy. Ef I'd called my mother a mare when I was a youngster, she'd have keeled me over quicker'n a wink. Then a gal is called a filly. That's most as bad. And what do you think I saw on the programme at the restorant where I go to get dinner?"

"What was it?" asked Frank, amused.

"It was poison, only it wasn't spelled right. The ignorant critters spelled it with a double s. I say they'd ought to be indicted for keepin' p'ison among their vittles."

"You have made a little mistake, Mr. Tar-

box. The word you refer to—*poisson*—is the French word for fish.”

“By gracious!” ejaculated Jonathan; “you don’t say so! Then it’s a mighty queer language, that’s all I’ve got to say. But speakin’ of eatin’, I ain’t had a decent meal of vittles since I came here.”

“I am surprised to hear you say that, Mr. Tarbox. The French have a high reputation for their cookery.”

“I can’t help that. I haven’t lived so mean since I was born.”

“Perhaps it is because you don’t know the names of the dishes you want.”

“Wall, there may be somethin’ in that. Why, the first day I p’inted to the first thing in the programme. It was among the pot-tages. They brought me some thin, watery stuff that would turn a pig sick. Somebody told me it was meant for soup. When my mother made soup, she put potatoes and meat in it, and carrots and turnips. Her soup was satisfyin’, and would stay a feller’s stummick. It wa’n’t like this thin stuff. It would take a hogshead of it to keep a baby alive till night.”

"What else did you get, Mr. Tarbox," asked Frank.

"I looked all through the programme for baked beans, and, would you believe it, they didn't have it at all."

"I believe it is not a French dish."

"Then the French don't know what's good, I can tell 'em that. Folks say they eat frogs, and it stands to reason if they like frogs, and don't like baked beans, they must be an ignorant set. I didn't understand any of the darned names, but I come across pommy de terry, and I thought that might be somethin' solid, so I told the gossoon to bring it. What do you think he brought?"

"Potatoes."

"Yes; I was so wild I come near flinging 'em in his face, but I concluded to keep 'em, and happened to see some mutton put down on the bill, though they didn't spell it right, so I pointed it out to the gossoon, and he brought it. It was pretty fair, but I tell you my mother can beat all the French cooks that's goin'. I jest wish she was here."

"We must go together some time, Mr. Tar-

box. I know some French, and I can tell you the names of some things you like, though I am afraid you will have to do without baked beans."

"I wish you would go with me, Frank. May be I can get along better with you."

"How about your invention, Mr. Tarbox? Is it attracting attention?"

"Nobody looks at it," said Jonathan, a little depressed. "The ladies turn up their noses, as if it wa'n't worth lookin' at. One old Frenchman come up and began to ask me about it, but I couldn't make head or tail of what he said. Then he offered me a pinch of snuff. I saw he meant to be polite, so I took a good dose, and 'most sneezed my head off. But about the plow; I've been thinkin' whether Lewis Napoleon would let me plow a few furrers in his garden, jest to let the French see how it works. Do you think he would?"

"I hardly think he would."

"You see, folks can't get much idea about it, jest lookin' at it here."

"You don't have to stay by it all the time, do you?"

"No."

"Then suppose you take a little walk with me round the buildings."

Being socially disposed, Mr. Tarbox accepted the proposal, and the two sauntered about together, Frank being continually amused by the unconsciously droll remarks of his countryman.

CHAPTER XIX.

FRANK ASSERTS HIS RIGHTS.

“**W**HO was that you were walking with yesterday, Frank?” asked Sharp-ley.

“Mr. Tarbox.”

“What, that confounded Yankee?” ejaculated Sharpley, roughly.

“What harm is there in him?” asked Frank, quietly.

“He is an ignorant barbarian. Mr. Craven wouldn’t like to have you associate with such a man.”

“I care very little what Mr. Craven would like,” said Frank.

“He is your step-father.”

“If he is, I can’t help it. I am only responsible to my mother for my conduct, and she would not object to my keeping company with a countryman.”

"I shouldn't want to own it," sneered Sharpley.

"Why not?"

"This Tarbox, if that is his name, is as green as his native hills, and an ignorant boor."

"I don't agree with you, Colonel Sharpley," said Frank, undaunted. "He is not well educated, but he has brains enough to have invented a plow of an improved pattern, which he is exhibiting here. He is young yet, and if he succeeds he will get rid of his awkwardness, and may in time occupy a prominent position in the community."

"I don't approve of elevating the rabble," said Sharpley; "and as you are my ward, I desire you not to associate with this Tarbox."

"If you had any good reason to offer, Colonel Sharpley, or if Mr. Tarbox were an improper person, I would obey; but, under the present circumstances, I must decline."

"What! You dare to defy me!" exclaimed Sharpley, who was in a worse temper

than usual, having lost money at cards the evening before.

"I don't wish to defy you, sir, but I must beg you to be reasonable."

"Do you dare insinuate that I am unreasonable?" said Sharpley, advancing as if to strike him.

Frank looked calmly in his face and didn't shrink. There was something in his eye which prevented the blow from falling. Sharpley bethought himself of another way of "coming up with" his rebellious charge.

"If you are going to act in this way," he said, "I shall send you home."

"I don't propose to go home, Colonel Sharpley," said Frank, firmly. "Now that I am here, I shall stay through the summer."

"Do you think you can compel me to keep charge of you?"

"No, sir; but since it is a trouble to you, I will place myself under the charge of Mr. Tarbox, though I feel quite competent to travel alone. If you will place in his hands what funds you have of mine, this will relieve you of all trouble."

"The deuce it will!" thought Sharpley, who knew that such a course would leave him absolutely helpless and penniless.

He began to see that he had overshot the mark. He would risk the utter failure of all his plans if a separation should take place between them. So, though it went against his grain, he resolved to make up with Frank. Forcing a smile, therefore, he said:

"Are you really anxious to leave me, Frank?"

Our hero was bewildered by the unexpected change of manner.

"I thought you were tired of me, sir," he said. "I am afraid I give you trouble and interfere with your plans."

"Not at all. I am sorry if I have given you such an impression. The fact is, I am vexed and irritated at some news I have heard, and that made me disposed to vent my irritation on you."

"I am sorry, sir, if you have had bad news. Is it anything serious?"

"Not very serious," said Sharpley; "but," he added, with ready invention, "it is vexa-

tious to hear that I have lost a thousand pounds."

"Yes; that is a serious loss," said Frank, with sympathy.

"It was invested, as I thought, safely; but the concern proves to be rotten, and my loss is total."

"I hope it won't seriously inconvenience you, Colonel Sharpley?"

"Oh, no; it is fortunately but a small part of my fortune," said Sharpley, with barefaced falsehood. "Still, it is annoying. But let it pass. To-morrow I shall feel all right. Meanwhile, if you really care to associate with this Tarbox, do so by all means. I confess he is not to my taste."

"He is not a countryman of yours, sir; he reminds me of home."

"Just so. By the way, I have letters for you from home."

"Oh, give them to me!" said Frank, eagerly. "I am longing to hear."

He eagerly opened the letters. One, a long one, crossed and recrossed, was from his mother. I will only quote one paragraph:

"I need hardly tell you, my dear son, how much I miss you. The house seems very dull and lonely without you. But I am glad you are enjoying yourself amid new scenes, and look forward with great interest to hear your accounts of what you have seen. I send a great deal of love, and hope to hear from you often.

"Your affectionate mother,

"MARY CRAVEN.

"P.S.—Mr. Craven has written a note to you, which will go by the same mail as this."

The other letter, written in a masculine hand, Frank opened with some curiosity. He had not expected to hear from Mr. Craven, and wondered what he would have to say. His letter being short, will be given entire:

"MY DEAR FRANK: As your mother is writing you, I cannot resist the temptation of sending a line also. We both miss you very much, but are consoled for your absence by the knowledge that you are enjoying and improving yourself in the Old World. Had circumstances been favorable, how pleasant it would have been if your mother and myself could have accompanied you. Let us hope that sometime such a plan may be carried out. Meanwhile, I feel truly happy to think that you are under the care of my friend, Colonel Sharpley, whom

I know to be a gentleman every way qualified for such a responsible trust. We are hoping to receive letters from you describing your travels. I will not write more now, but subscribe myself

“Your affectionate step-father,

“SAMUEL CRAVEN.”

There was nothing to complain of in this letter. It was kind and cordial, and exhibited a strong and affectionate interest in our hero. Yet Frank read it without any special feeling of gratitude; nor was he drawn by it any nearer to the writer. He blamed himself for his coldness.

“Why can’t I like him?” he said to himself. “He seems very kind, and wants me to enjoy myself. I suppose he was partly the means of my coming out on this tour. Yet that doesn’t make me like him.”

Frank could not tell why he felt so, but it was an instinctive perception of Mr. Craven’s insincerity, and the falseness of his character and professions that influenced him. He folded the letters, first reading his mother’s a second time, and went out, Colonel Sharpley having already departed. He bent his steps

to the exhibition building, and made his way to Mr. Tarbox.

"Good morning, Mr. Tarbox," he said. "How do you feel to-day?"

"Pooty smart. You look as if you've heerd good news."

"I have had two letters from home."

"So have I."

"Any news?"

"Yes," said Jonathan; "the brindle cow's got a calf."

Frank smiled.

"That's my cow," said Mr. Tarbox, seriously; "she's a stunner for givin' milk; she gives a pailful in the mornin', and two pailfuls at night. I'm goin' to make money out of that cow."

"And out of that plow, too, I hope."

"I don't know," said Mr. Tarbox, shaking his head. "These ignorant furriners don't seem to care nothin' about plows. They care more about silks and laces, and sich like."

"Was that all the news you got—about the cow, I mean?"

"No," said Jonathan, chuckling a little,

and lowering his voice; "I got a letter from her."

"From her?"

"Yes, from my gal."

"Oh, I understand," said Frank, laughing. "How glad you must be."

"Yes, sir-ee. I feel like a fly in a molasses keg—all over sweetness."

"Then she hasn't forgotten you?"

"I guess not. How do you think she ended her letter?"

"I can't tell."

"Wait a minute, and I'll read you the endin' off. Here it is:

'If you love me as I love you,
No knife can cut our love in two.'

"Arn't that scrumptious?"

"I should think it was. I hope you'll introduce me some day, when she's Mrs. Tarbox."

"Yes, I will. You must come up to the farm, and stay a week in the summer."

"By that time you'll have made your fortune out of the plow."

“I hope so. Where are you goin’?”

“I am going to visit the French department of the exhibition.”

“Wal, I’ll go along with you. I want to see if they’ve got any plow here to compare with mine. I don’t believe they know enough to make anything useful.”

Mr. Tarbox certainly did the French injustice, but he was under the sway of prejudice, and was quite disposed to exalt the useful at the expense of the beautiful.

CHAPTER XX.

FRANK LEAVES PARIS.

THERE was a letter from Mr. Craven to Sharpley, which came by the same mail as those mentioned in the preceding chapter. It contained the following paragraph:

"I suppose you will travel to Switzerland with Frank. I suppose so, because in the summer it is very attractive to the tourist. As accidents are very apt to happen to careless travelers, let me request you to keep a good lookout for him, and not let him approach too near the edge of precipices, or clefts in the mountains. He might easily fall over, and I shudder, not only to think of his fate in that case, but of the grief which would overwhelm his mother and myself. I beg you will keep us apprised of his health, and should any accident happen, write at once."

Sharpley read over this passage with attention. Then he folded the letter, and muttered to himself:

"What a consummate hypocrite that villain

Craven is! Any one, to read this letter, would suppose that he was actuated by the warmest attachment for his step-son; and all the while he is planning his death, and coolly suggesting to me an easy way of bringing it about. I am bad enough, or I would not lend myself to carry out his plans, but I'm not such a miserable hypocrite as he is. However, I've seen too much of the world to be shocked at anybody's depravity, having a fair share of wickedness myself. As to the suggestion, I must confess that it's a good one, and relieves me from a good deal of anxious thought. I've been considering how best I could get rid of the young incumbrance. It occurred to me that I could lock him up, and set some charcoal to burning in his room; but, heating the room—it's too hot already. Then, again, I thought of poison. But there's a chance of a post-mortem examination. That won't do. But Craven's plan is best. As far as I can see it will be effectual, and free from danger also. As soon as I can decently get away from Paris, I'll take the boy to Switzerland. I must stay here a week

at least, especially as the exhibition is open, or it might draw suspicion upon me. When I'm rid of the boy I shall breathe freer. Then for America, and a final reckoning with Craven. With ten thousand dollars—and more, if I can extort it from him—I will set up for respectability, and develop into a substantial citizen. Good-by, then, to the gambling table. It has been my bane, but, with a fair competence, I will try to resist its fascinations.”

Sharpley and our hero met at the *table d'hôte* dinner and at breakfast. For the remainder of the day Frank was left to his own devices; but for this he cared little. Either alone, or in company with Mr. Tarbox, he went about the city, often as an outside passenger on the street stages which ply from one end of Paris to the other, and in this way he came to have a very good idea of the plan of the brilliant capital.

On the sixth day, while they were at dinner, Sharpley said:

“Well, Frank, have you seen considerable of Paris?”

"Oh, yes, sir; I am getting to know my way around pretty well."

"I am sorry I have not been able to go about with you more."

"That is of no consequence, sir. I have got on very well alone."

"Have you written home?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am afraid you will be disappointed at what I am going to say."

"What is it, sir?"

"I have arranged for our leaving Paris to-morrow evening."

"Not to go back to England?" asked Frank, hastily.

"No. I propose to go to Switzerland."

"I should like that," said our hero, brightening up. "I have always wanted to see Switzerland."

"I didn't know but you would be sorry to leave Paris."

"So I should be if I thought we were not coming back this way. We shall, sha'n't we?"

"Yes."

"And we shall have time to stay here a little while then?"

"No doubt."

"Then I can defer the rest of my sight-seeing till then. What route shall we take?"

"As to that, there is a variety of routes. It doesn't matter much to me. I will leave the choice to you."

"Will you?" said Frank, eagerly. "Then I will get out my map after dinner and pick it out."

"Very well. You can tell me to-morrow morning."

The next morning Sharpley put the question to Frank:

"Well, have you decided by what route you would like to travel?"

"Can't we go east to the Rhine, and go up that river to Mayence, and thence to Geneva by rail?"

"Certainly, if you like. It will be quite a pleasant route."

"I always thought I should like to go up the Rhine. I have been up the Hudson, which I have often heard compared to the Rhine."

"There is no comparison between them," said Sharpley, who, not being an American, was not influenced by a patriotic prejudice in favor of the Hudson. "The Rhine has ruined castles and vine-clad hills, and is far more interesting."

"Very likely," said Frank. "At any rate, I want to see it."

"We will start to-morrow night, then. Morning will bring us across the frontier. You will be ready, of course?"

"Yes, sir."

The next morning Frank went to the exposition to acquaint Mr. Tarbox with his approaching departure.

"Are you goin' ? I'm real sorry, Frank," said the Yankee. "I shall kinder hanker arter you, boy. You seem like home. As to them chatterin', frog-eatin' furriners, I can't understand a word they say, and ef I could I wouldn't want to."

"I am afraid you are prejudiced, Mr. Tarbox. I have met some very agreeable French people."

"I haven't," said Mr. Tarbox. "They don't

suit me. There ain't nothin' solid or substantial about 'em."

"You may get acquainted with some English people. You can understand them."

"I don't like 'em," said Jonathan. "They think they can whip all creation. We gave 'em a lesson, I guess, at Bunker Hill."

"Let by-gones be by-gones, Mr. Tarbox; or, as Longfellow says:

"'Let the dead Past bury its dead.'"

"Did Longfellow write that?"

"Yes."

"Then he ain't so smart as I thought he was. How can anybody that's dead bury himself, I'd like to know? It's ridiculous."

"I suppose it's figurative."

"It ain't sense. But that aint to the point. Whereabouts in Switzerland are you goin', Frank?"

"I don't know, except that we go to Geneva."

"Can you write me a letter from there?"

"Certainly. I will do so with pleasure, and shall be glad to hear from you."

"All right. I ain't much on scribblin'. I can hold a plow better'n a pen. But I guess I can write a few pot-hooks, jest to let yer know I'm alive an' kickin'."

"It's a bargain, then."

"Jest give me your name on a piece of paper, so I shall know where to write."

"All right. I happen to know where we are going to stop there. Mr. Sharpley mentioned that we should stop at the Hotel des Bergues. I haven't got a card with me, but I'll put the address on an old envelope."

Frank took from his pocket what he supposed to be Mr. Craven's letter to him, and on the reverse side wrote :

FRANK HUNTER,
Hotel des Bergues,
Geneva,
Switzerland.

Mr. Tarbox took it and surveyed it critically ; then read it as follows :

" ' Frank Hunter, Hotel dese Bugs.' Wal, that's a queer name for a tavern," he said.
" I s'pose that's French for bugs ?"

"It means that the big bugs stop there," said Frank, jocosely.

"Some of the big bugs are humbugs," said Jonathan, laughing grimly at his own wit.

When, after leaving Mr. Tarbox, Frank happened to examine his pockets, he drew out the two letters he had received. This puzzled him. What letter was that which he had given his Yankee friend, then? He could not tell. We are wiser. Sharpley had incautiously left on the table Craven's letter to him, and Frank had put it into his pocket, supposing it to be his. This it was which had passed into the possession of Mr. Tarbox.

Three days later Mr. Tarbox discovered the letter, and curiosity made him unscrupulous. He read it through, including the paragraph already quoted.

"By hokey!" he muttered. "That's queer. 'Should any accident happen, write at once.' He seems to expect an accident will happen. I'll bet that man is a snake in the grass. He's Frank's guardian, and he's got up some plot ag'in him. I always disliked that Sharpley. He's a skunk. I'll start for Switzerland to-

morrow, and let the old plow go to thunder. I'm bound to look out for Frank."

Mr. Tarbox was energetic. He went to his lodgings, packed his carpet-bag, and early next morning started in pursuit of Frank and Sharpley.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HOTEL DU GLACIER.

HIGH up among the Bernese Alps stands the Hotel du Glacier. It is a small hotel, of limited accommodations, but during the season it is generally full of visitors. The advantage is, that a comparatively short walk carries one to a point where he has a fine view of that mountain scenery which is the glory of Switzerland, and draws thither thousands of pilgrims annually.

In rustic chairs outside sat at eight o'clock in the morning our young hero, Frank Hunter, and his temporary guardian, Colonel Sharpley. In front a beautiful prospect spread out before the two travelers. Snowy peaks, their rough surface softened by distance, abounding in beetling cliffs and fearful gorges, but overlooking smiling valleys, were plainly visible.

"Isn't it magnificent?" exclaimed Frank, with the enthusiasm of youth.

"Yes, I dare say," said Sharpley, yawning, "but I'm not romantic; I've outlived all that."

"I don't believe I shall ever outlive my admiration for such scenery as this," thought Frank.

"Don't you enjoy it?" he asked.

"Oh, so so; but the fact is, I came here chiefly because I thought you would like it. I've been the regular Swiss tour more than once."

"You are very kind to take so much trouble on my account," said Frank.

"Oh, I might as well be here as anywhere," said Sharpley. "Just at present there is nothing in particular to take up my attention. Did you order breakfast?"

"Yes, Colonel Sharpley."

"Go and ask if it isn't ready, will you?"

Frank entered the inn, and soon returned with the information that breakfast was ready. They entered a small dining-room, where they found the simple meal awaiting them.

The regular Swiss breakfast consists of coffee, bread and butter, and honey, and costs, let me add, for the gratification of my reader's curiosity, thirty cents in gold. Dinner comprises soup, three courses of meat, and a pudding or fruit, and costs from sixty cents to a dollar, according to the pretensions of the hotel. In fact, so far as hotel expenses go, two dollars a day in gold will be quite sufficient in the majority of cases. If meat is required for breakfast, that is additional.

"How good the coffee is," said Frank. "I never tasted it as good in America."

"They know how to make it here, but why didn't you order breakfast?"

"I thought they would supply meat without an order."

"I always want meat; I have got beyond my bread-and-butter days," said Sharpley, with a dash of sarcasm.

"I have not," said Frank, "especially when both are so good. What are your plans for the day, Colonel Sharpley?"

"I think we'll take a climb after breakfast," said Sharpley. "What do you say?"

"I should like nothing better," said Frank, eagerly. "But," he added, "I am afraid you are going entirely on my account."

"How well the boy has guessed it," thought Sharpley. "It is on his account I am going, but he must not know that."

"Oh, no," he said; "I feel like taking a ramble among the hills. It would be stupid staying at the inn."

"Then," said Frank, with satisfaction, "I shall be glad to go. Shall we take a guide?"

"Not this morning," said Sharpley. "Let us have the pleasure of exploring independently. To-morrow we will arrange a long excursion with guides."

"I suppose it is quite safe?"

"Oh, yes, if we don't wander too far. I shall be ready in about half an hour."

"I will be ready," said Frank.

"And I'll smoke a cigar."

Just then a gentleman came up, whose acquaintance they had made the previous day. It was a Mr. Abercrombie, an American gentleman, from Chicago, who was accompanied by his son Henry, a boy about Frank's age.

"What are your plans for to-day, Mr. Sharpley?" he asked.

"I hope he isn't going to thrust himself upon us," thought Sharpley, savagely, for he was impatient of anything that was likely to interfere with his wicked design.

"I have none in particular," he answered.

"You are not going to remain at the inn, are you? That would be dull."

"Confound the man's curiosity!" muttered Sharpley, to himself.

"I may wander about a little, but I shall make no excursion worth speaking of till to-morrow."

"Why can't we join company?" said Mr. Abercrombie, in a friendly manner. "Our young people are well acquainted, and we can keep each other company. Enlarge your plan a little, and take a guide."

"I wish the man was back in America," thought Sharpley. "Why won't he see that he's a bore?"

"Really," he said, stiffly, "you must excuse me; I don't feel equal to any sort of an excursion to-day."

"Then," said the other, still in a friendly way, "let your boy come with us. I will look after him, and my son will like his company."

Frank heard this application, and as he had taken a fancy to Henry and his father, he hoped that Sharpley would reply favorably. He felt that he should enjoy their company better than his guardian's.

Sharpley was greatly irritated, but obliged to keep within the bounds of politeness to avoid suspicion, when something had happened, as he meant something should happen before the sun set.

"I hope you won't think me impolite," he said, "but I mean, by and by, to walk a little, and would like Frank's company. To-morrow I shall be very happy to join you."

Nothing more could be said, of course, but Henry Abercrombie whispered to Frank:

"I'm sorry we're not going to be together to-day."

"So am I," answered Frank; "but we'll have a bully time to-morrow. I suppose I ought to stay with Colonel Sharpley."

"He isn't any relation of yours, is he?"

"Oh, no; I am only traveling in his company."

"So I thought. You don't look much alike."

"No; I suppose not."

Half an hour passed, but the Abercrombies were still there.

"Shall we go?" asked Frank.

"Not, yet," said Sharpley, shortly.

He did not mean to start till the other travelers were gone, lest he should be followed. For he had screwed his courage to the sticking point, and made up his mind that he would that day do the deed which he had covenanted with Mr. Craven to do. The sooner the better, he thought, for it would bring him nearer the large sum of money which he expected to realize as the price of our hero's murder.

Twenty minutes afterward the Abercrombies, equipped for a mountain walk, swinging their alpenstocks, started off, accompanied by a guide.

"Won't you reconsider your determination and go?" asked the father.

Sharpley shook his head.

"I don't feel equal to the exertion," he answered.

"I hope you'll have a pleasant excursion, Henry," said Frank, looking wistfully after his young friend.

"It would be pleasanter if you were going along," said Henry.

"Thank you."

Frank said no more, but waited till Sharp-ley had smoked another cigar. By this time twenty minutes had elapsed.

"I think we'll go now, Frank," said Sharp-ley.

At the welcome intimation Frank jumped up briskly.

"Shall I order some lunch to be packed for us?" he asked.

"No; we sha'n't need it," said Sharp-ley.

Frank laughed.

"I think I'll get some for myself," said Frank, laughing, as he added: "I've got a healthy appetite, Colonel Sharp-ley, and I am sure the exertion of climbing these hills will make me fearfully hungry."

"I don't want to be delayed," said Sharp-

ley, frowning. "We sha'n't be gone long enough to need lunch."

"It won't take me a minute," said Frank, running into the inn.

"It is strange he is so much in a hurry all at once," thought our young hero, "when he has been lounging about for an hour without appearing in the least haste."

However, he did not spend much thought on Sharpley's wayward humor, which he was beginning to see was regulated by no rules.

Less than five minutes afterward he appeared, provided with a tourist's lunch-box.

"I've got enough for you, Colonel Sharpley," he said, "in case we stay out longer than we anticipate."

The landlord closely followed him, and addressed himself to Sharpley:

"Will not monsieur have a guide?" he asked.

"No," said Sharpley.

"My son, Baptiste, is an experienced guide, and can show monsieur and his young friend the finest prospects."

"I shall need no guide," said Sharpley, impatiently. "Frank, come along."

"It will only be six francs," persisted the landlord, "and Baptiste—"

"I don't want Baptiste," said Sharpley, gruffly. "Plague take the man!" he muttered to himself. "He is making himself a regular nuisance."

"I wish he would take a guide," thought Frank, no suspicion of the importance to himself of having one entering his mind.

CHAPTER XXII.

OVER THE BRINK.

THEY started on their walk provided with alpenstocks, for just above them was the snow-line, and they could not go far without encountering ice also. The Hotel du Glacier stood thousands of feet above the sea-level, and was a favorite resort with those who enjoyed the sublimity of mountain scenery.

Though Sharpley was by no means the companion he would have best liked, Frank was in high spirits, as he realized that he was really four thousand miles from home, surrounded by the famous mountains of which he had so often read.

"Have you ever been up this mountain before, Colonel Sharpley?" asked Frank.

"Not up this mountain. I have ascended others, however. I once crossed over Mount Cenis to Italy."

"How? Did you walk?"

"No. I went in a diligence."

"It must have been fine. Shall we go into Italy?"

"Perhaps so."

"I should like it very much. I have read so much about Italy."

"How I wish Ben Cameron were here!" said Frank, after a pause.

He did not so much mean to say this to Sharpley, but the thought entered his mind, and he unconsciously uttered it aloud.

"Who is Ben Cameron?"

"He is a friend of mine at home. We were a great deal together."

"Was he the boy that was with you when I first met you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph! I have no desire for his company," thought Sharpley.

"Have you a glass with you, Colonel Sharpley?" asked Frank.

"Yes. Would you like to use it?"

"If you please."

It was a small spy-glass, not powerful, but

serviceable. Frank adjusted it to his eye, and looked earnestly in a certain direction.

"What do you see?" asked his companion.

"Wait a minute. I am not certain. Yes, it is they."

"Who?" demanded Sharpley, impatiently.

"The Abercrombies. They are higher up than we, over there, but not very much out of our way. Shall we join them?" asked Frank, hopefully.

"Where are they? Let me see," said Sharpley, seizing the glass.

He thought Frank might be mistaken, but a glance through the glass satisfied him that he was right. There was Mr. Abercrombie, toiling up a steep ascent, with his son following, the latter assisted by the guide.

"Do you see them?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think we can overtake them?"

"Perhaps we might, but I for one don't intend to try."

Frank looked at him inquiringly.

"Why not?"

"I thought you heard me decline to join them at the hotel. I have no fancy for company to-day."

"Excuse me," said Frank, politely. "I might have remembered it."

"You can join them to-morrow if you feel like it," said Sharpley, emphasizing the last clause.

Frank noticed the emphasis, and wondered at it a little. It seemed to imply that he might not choose to do it, and that did not seem very likely. However, possibly the emphasis was unconscious, and his mind did not dwell upon it.

They were now walking along a ledge scarcely more than six feet wide, terminating in a sheer precipice.

"I wonder if accidents often happen here?" suggested Frank.

"Such as what?" sharply interrogated his companion.

"I mean such as slipping over these cliffs."

"Not often, I presume," said Sharpley. "No one who exercises common prudence need fear slipping."

His heart began to beat quicker, for he saw that the moment was approaching in which his fearful work was to be done.

"The dangers of the Alps are very greatly exaggerated," he said, indifferently.

"It looks dangerous," said Frank.

"Yes, I presume so. Suppose we approach the edge cautiously and look down."

There is a fatal fascination about danger. Just as the moth hovers persistently about the flame, to which in the end he falls a victim, so we are disposed to draw near dangers at which we shudder. We like to see it for ourselves, and, shuddering, to say: "Suppose I should fall in."

Our young hero was of a daring disposition. He had never been timid or nervous, inheriting his father's physical traits, not his mother's. So Sharpley's proposal struck him favorably, being an appeal to his courage.

"I should like to look over," he said.

As he spoke he drew near the fatal brink, not observing that his companion was not at his side, but just behind him.

"Now for it!" thought Sharpley, his breath coming thick and fast.

One push from behind, and Frank was over the ledge, falling—falling—falling.

There was one scream of terror, and Sharpley found himself alone upon the cliff.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GIVING THE ALARM.

THERE are not many men who can commit a crime of violence without an inward shudder and a thrill of horror. Sharp-ley was not a professional murderer. He had never before taken life. His offences against law had been many, but none had stained his soul with blood till now.

He felt faint as he saw the disappearance of his young ward, sped by his own hand to a death so fearful.

"It is done and can't be undone," he muttered. "He will never know what hurt him. I am glad it's over. It was a dirty job, but I had to do it. Craven forced me to this. He must pay well for it."

"Shall I look over the cliff?" he asked himself.

He advanced a step, but drew back with a shudder.

"No, I can't do it," he said to himself. "It will make me dizzy. I shall run the risk of falling over myself."

He retraced his steps for a few rods, and then sat down to think. It was necessary that he should concoct some plausible account of the accident, in order to avoid suspicion, though that was not likely to fall upon him. Who could dream of any motive that would impel him to such a deed? Yet there was such a motive, as he well knew, but the only one who shared the knowledge was in America, and he was criminally connected with the crime.

Sharpley soon determined upon his course and his explanation. The latter would necessitate a search for the boy, and this made him pause.

"But, pshaw!" he said, "the boy is dead. He must have been killed at once; and the dead tell no tales. I must get back to the hotel and give the alarm."

An hour later Sharpley approached the

inn. He had walked quietly till then, but now he had a part to play.

He rushed into the inn in breathless haste, nearly knocking over the portly landlord, whom he encountered in the passage.

"What is the matter, monsieur?" asked the landlord, with eyes distended.

"The boy!" gasped Sharpley.

"What of the boy, monsieur?"

"He has fallen over a precipice," he exclaimed.

"*Oh, ciel!*" exclaimed the landlord. "How did it happen?"

"We were walking on a narrow ledge," explained Sharpley. "On one side there was a steep descent. I don't know how many hundreds of feet deep. The boy approached the edge. I warned him to be careful, but he was very rash. He did not obey me. He leaned too far, lost his balance, and fell over. I sprang forward to save him, but it was too late."

"It is horrible!" said the landlord. "Was he your son?"

"No, but he was the son of a dear friend.



OVER THE LEDGE.

Oh, how shall I break the sad tidings to his father and mother? Is there no hope of his life being saved?"

"I fear not," said the landlord, gravely. "You should have taken Baptiste with you, as I advised."

"Oh, my friend, I wish I had!" said the hypocrite, fervently. "Where is Baptiste? Let us go and see if we can find the poor boy?"

"Here I am at your service, monsieur," said Baptiste. "I will take a comrade with me. We will save him if we can, but I fear there is no hope."

Ten minutes later Sharpley, accompanied by two guides, and some of the guests of the hotel, who had been struck with horror on hearing the news, were wending their way up the mountain in quest of our hero.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SHARPLEY DISSEMBLES.

THERE was some delay about starting, but at length the party got under way. Very little conversation took place, and that little related only to the accident. The spell of the awful tragedy was upon them, and their faces were grave and their spirits depressed.

And what shall we say of the guilty man, who alone could unlock the mystery?—who alone could account for the boy's tragic end? His mind was in a tumult of contradictory emotions. He was glad that it was all over—that the fearful task which in America he had agreed to execute, which had haunted him for these many days and nights, was no longer before him to do, that it was already done. He saw before him, mercenary wretch that he was, the promised reward, in a sum of money which would be to him a competence, and which, carefully husbanded, would relieve

all his money anxieties for the future. But, on the other hand, there came the shuddering thought that he had wrought the death of an unoffending boy, who had looked up to him as a guide and protector, but whom he had only lured to his ruin.

"Are accidents frequent among the mountains?" asked one of the guests, addressing Baptiste, the guide.

"No, monsieur; not in this part. When travelers are hurt or killed, it is because they are careless or go without guides."

"As I did," said Sharpley, who felt it would be polite to take upon himself this blame, and so skilfully evade suspicion of a graver fault. "You are right, and I am much to blame; but I did not expect to go so far, nor did I think Frank would be so imprudent. But it is not for me to blame the poor boy, who has been so fearfully punished for his boldness. You would not have let him go so near the edge of the cliff?"

"No, monsieur; or, if he went, I would have held him while he looked down."

"It is what I should have done. Oh, how

horrible it was to see him fall over the cliff?"

And Sharpley shuddered, a genuine shudder; for, guilty as he was, the picture was one to appall him.

"Oh, how shall I tell his poor mother?" he continued, acting wonderfully well.

The rest were silent, respecting what they thought to be his grief.

They had, perhaps, half achieved the ascent, when they fell in with the Abercrombies, who were just returning from their excursion. They regarded the ascending party with surprise.

"What!" said Mr. Abercrombie to Sharpley, "are you just going up the mountain? You are very late."

"Where is Frank?" asked Henry Abercrombie, looking in vain among the party for our hero, to whom, as already said, he had taken a fancy.

There was silence at first, each of those in the secret regarding the rest. But it was to Sharpley that Mr. Abercrombie looked for a reply. The delay surprised him.

"What is the matter?" he asked, at length.
"Has anything happened?"

"Somebody tell him," said Sharpley, in pretended emotion.

Baptiste was the one to respond.

"Monsieur," he said, gravely, "a terrible thing has happened. The poor boy has fallen into a ravine."

"What!" exclaimed father and son, in horror.

"Frank fallen? Why I saw him only this morning. I asked him to go with us. Is this true?" said Henry.

"It is only too true, my boy," said Sharpley, covering his face.

And he repeated his version of the accident with well-counterfeited emotion.

"Is there no hope?" asked Henry, with pale face.

Baptiste shook his head.

"I am afraid not," he said; "but I can tell better when I see the place."

"How can there be any hope?" asked Mr. Abercrombie.

"He might have fallen on the deep snow,

or on some intermediate ledge, and so saved his life."

"Good Heaven!" thought Sharpley, in dismay. "Suppose it should be so? Suppose he is alive, and should expose me? I should be ruined. But no! It cannot be. There is not one chance in a hundred. Yet that one chance disturbs me. I must find out as soon as possible, in order that my mind may be at ease."

"Come on!" he said, aloud. "While we are lingering here the boy may die. Let us make haste."

"I will go with you," said Mr. Abercrombie.

"And I," said Henry.

CHAPTER XXV.

A USELESS SEARCH.

“**I**S this the place?” asked Baptiste, as, half an hour later, they stood on the fatal cliff.

“This is the place,” said Sharpley.

“Let me look over,” said Henry, advancing to the edge.

“Are you mad?” exclaimed his father, drawing him back hastily.

“I will look, gentlemen,” said the guide. “It will be safest for me.”

He threw himself flat upon his stomach, and thus in safety peeped into the chasm.

“Do you see anything?” asked Sharpley, agitated.

“Wait till I look earnestly,” and after a breathless pause, he answered slowly:

“No, I see nothing; but the cliff is not so steep or so high as I thought. There are

some bushes growing in parts. He might be stopped by these."

"You can't see any traces of him, can you?"

Another pause.

"No. The snow seems disturbed in one place, but if he had fallen there, he would be there still."

"Might he not have fallen there and rolled to the bottom?"

"Perhaps so. I cannot tell."

"Let me look," said Sharpley.

The suggestion of the possibility that Frank might have escaped was fraught to him with danger. All his hopes of safety and success depended upon the boy's death. He wanted to see for himself.

The guide rose, and Sharpley, imitating his posture, threw himself on the ground and looked over, borrowing the glass. But such a sense of horror, brought on by his own criminality, overcame him as he lay there that his vision was blurred, and he came near dropping the glass. He rose, trembling.

"I can see nothing of him," he said. "He

is certainly dead. Poor boy! He could not possibly have escaped."

"Let me look," said Abercrombie.

But he also could see no trace of the body.

"I think," he said, rising, "that our best course will be to descend and explore at the bottom of the cliff."

"It will be of no use," said Sharpley.

"We can at least find the body and give it decent burial. Baptiste, is there no way of descending?"

"Yes," said Baptiste, "but we shall need to go a long distance around."

"How long will it take?"

"An hour; perhaps more."

"I am ready to go, for one," said Mr. Abercrombie. "Will you go, Mr. Sharpley?"

"I do not feel equal to the exertion. I am too agitated."

Glances of pity were directed toward him.

"Baptiste," said Abercrombie, "if you will guide me, and any one else who chooses to join the expedition, I will pay you double price."

"Monsieur," said Baptiste, who had feel-

ings, though not indifferent to money, "I will guide you for nothing, out of regard for the poor boy."

"You are an honest fellow," said Mr. Abercrombie, grasping his hand warmly. "You shall not lose by it."

"May I go, father?" asked Henry.

"No, my son. The exertion will be too great for you. Go home with the rest of the party."

In silence the party returned to the Hotel du Glacier. Most were appalled by the sad fate of Frank Hunter, but Sharpley was moved by another feeling. There was not much chance of Frank's being found alive, or in a condition to expose his murderous attempt, but, of course, there was a slight possibility. While that existed he felt ill at ease. He would gladly have left the place at once, but this he could not do without exciting suspicion. He must wait till the return of the party.

It was not till nightfall that the party were seen returning. Sharpley waited for their report in great suspense.

"Have you found him?" he demanded, pale with excitement.

Baptiste shook his head.

He gave a sigh of quiet relief, which was interpreted to be a sigh of sorrow. "I thought you would not," he said.

The next day he left the hotel.

"I must go to America," he said, "to tell Frank's mother the terrible truth. I cannot trust it to a letter."

"But suppose the body is found," said Baptiste.

"Bury it decently and write instantly to me, and I will transmit the necessary sum. Or, hold, here are a hundred and fifty francs. If he is not found, keep them yourself."

An hour later he was on his way to Paris.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. TARBOX ON THE TRAIL.

“SO this is the Hotel de Bugs,” said Jonathan Tarbox, as, carpet-bag in hand, he approached, with long strides, the well-known Hotel des Bergues in Geneva. “It looks like a nice sort of a hotel. I wonder if Frank and that rascally humbug are stoppin’ here. I’d give twenty-five cents to see that boy’s face. Strange what a fancy I’ve took to him. He’s a reg’lar gentleman; as quick and sharp as a steel-trap.”

Mr. Tarbox had walked from the railway station. He was naturally economical, and, having all his life been accustomed to walk, thought it a waste and extravagance to take a carriage. He had inquired his way by simply pronouncing the name of the hotel as

above. The similarity in sound was sufficient to insure a correction.

He entered the hotel and found the landlord.

"I say, captain, I want to put up here to-night."

"Will monsieur have a room?" asked the host, politely.

"If you mean me, that's what I want; but I ain't a monseer at all. I'm a Yankee."

"Monsieur Yang-kee?" said the landlord, a little puzzled.

"Look here, captain, I ain't a monseer—I don't eat frogs. Do I look like it. No, I'm a straight-down, dyed-in-the-wool Yankee, from Squashboro', State o' Maine."

"Will you have a room?" asked the landlord, avoiding the word monsieur, which he perceived the other disclaimed, for some reason which he could not very well comprehend.

"Yes, I will, if I can get one cheap. I don't want none of your big apartments, that cost like blazes. I want a little room, with a bed in it, and a chair."

"We have *petits appartements*—very small price."

"Give me one, then. Oh, hold on ; is there a boy named Frank Hunter stoppin' here, with a man named Sharpley ?"

"*Non*, monsieur. He has been here, but he is gone."

"Gone ? When did he go ?"

"Three days ago."

"Three days !" repeated Mr. Tarbox, thoughtfully. "He didn't stay long, then ?"

"Only one night."

"Seems to me he was in a hurry. Isn't there nothin' worth seein' round here ?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur," said the landlord, with animation. "*Geneve* is a very interesting city. Would you not like to see how they make the watches, and the boxes of *musique* ? There are many places here that strangers do visit. There is the cathedral and the *Musee*. Monsieur should stay here one—two weeks."

"And put up at your tavern ?"

"Eh ?"

"And stop up at your hotel ?"

"*Certainement*, monsieur."

"That's what I thought. Anyhow, I'll stay here till to-morrow. But about this old rascal—"

"Monsieur?"

"I mean this Sharpley, and the boy—where did they go?"

"I know not, monsieur. They went to see the mountains."

"Well, captain, as mountains in this neighborhood are about as thick as huckleberry bushes in a pastur', I ain't none the wiser for that. Couldn't you tell me a little plainer?"

But this the landlord, or captain, as Mr. Tarbox insisted upon calling him, was unable to do. As there was nothing else to be done, our Yankee friend selected a room on the top floor, which, by reason of its elevation, he was enabled to get for two francs a day.

In European hotels the rooms become cheaper the higher up they are, and thus various prices are paid at the same hotel. It is not necessarily expensive, therefore, sojourning at a first-class hotel abroad ; and, indeed,

it is better than to take lower rooms in an inferior inn, supposing the traveler's means to be limited.

"Well," said Mr. Tarbox, looking about him, when he was fairly installed in his room, "my journey ain't going to cost me so much, after all. I come third class to Geneva for less'n ten dollars, and I can live here pretty cheap. But that ain't the question. Whereabouts among these hills is Frank? That's what I'd like to know. I wonder what that step-father of his meant by his talk about accidents? If anything happens to Frank, and I find it out, I'll stir 'em up, as sure as my name's Jonathan Tarbox. But I'm getting hungry; I'll go down and see what kind of fodder they can give me. I guess I'd better clean up first, for I'm as dirty as ef I'd been out in the field plowin'."

Mr. Tarbox made a satisfactory supper at moderate expense. He didn't go to the *table d'hôte*, for, as he said, "They bring you a mouthful of this, and a mouthful of that, and when you're through ten or eleven courses, you have to pay a dollar, more or less, and

are as hungry as when you began. I'd rather order something *a la carte*, as they call it, though what it has to do with a cart is more than I can tell, and then I can get enough, and don't have so much to pay neither."

Mr. Tarbox made further inquiries the next day, but could not ascertain definitely in what direction the travelers had gone. There were several possible routes, and they were as likely to have gone by one as by another. Under the circumstances it seemed to him that it was better to remain where he was. There was a chance of the two returning by way of Geneva, and they would be likely to come to the same hotel; while if he started off in one direction, it would very probably turn out that they had gone by another. One circumstance certainly favored his decision—it was cheaper remaining in Geneva than in journeying off at random in search of Frank, and Mr. Tarbox, therefore, decided to patronize the Hotel des Bergues for a short time at least, trying, meanwhile, to get some clew to the whereabouts of the travelers. He improved the time by visiting the objects of

interest in Geneva, bewildering the natives by his singular remarks, and amusing strangers with whom he came in contact. Some were disposed to regard him as a specimen of the average American. Indeed, he bore a striking resemblance to the typical American introduced by our English friends in their books of travel and in their dramatic productions.

He did indeed possess some national characteristics. He was independent, fearless, self-reliant, hating injustice and oppression, but he was without the polish, or culture, or refinement which are to be found in the traveling Americans quite as commonly as in the traveling Englishman or German. He is presented here as a type of a class which does exist, but not as an average American.

It struck Mr. Tarbox that he might obtain some information of those whom he sought by inquiring of the travelers who came daily to the hotel, whether they had met with such a party. No diffidence held him back from questioning closely all who came.

Some treated him with hauteur, and tried

to abash him by impressing him with the unwarrantable liberty he was taking in intruding himself upon their notice.

In general, however, these were snobs, of some wealth, but doubtful social position, who felt it necessary to assert themselves upon all occasions.

But Mr. Tarbox was not one to be daunted by coldness, or abashed by a repellant manner. He persisted in his questions until he learned what he wanted. But his questions were without a satisfactory answer until one day he saw a gentleman and his son, whom by their appearance he took to be fellow-countrymen. They were, in fact, Henry Abercrombie and his father, fresh from the scene of the accident.

Mr. Tarbox introduced himself and propounded his question.

Father and son exchanged a look of sadness.

"He means poor Frank, father," said Henry.

"Poor Frank!" repeated Mr. Tarbox, eagerly. "What makes you say that?"

"Were you a friend of the boy?" asked Mr. Abercrombie.

"Yes, and I am still. He's a tip-top fellow, Frank is."

"I am sorry, then, to be the bearer of sad tidings."

"What do you mean?" asked Jonathan, quickly. "Don't say anything has happened to the boy."

"But there has. He fell over a cliff, and though his body has not been found, he was probably killed instantly."

"Who was with him when he fell?" asked Mr. Tarbox, excited.

"His guardian, Mr. Sharpley. The two had wandered off by themselves, without a guide. Frank approached too near the edge of the cliff, lost his balance, and fell."

"That confounded skunk pushed him over!" exclaimed Mr. Tarbox, in high excitement.

"You don't mean Colonel Sharpley?" exclaimed Mr. Abercrombie, in surprise.

"Yes, I do. I followed them from Paris, because I was afraid of it."

"But it is incredible. I assure you Colonel Sharpley showed great sorrow for the accident."

"Then he's a hypocrite! If you want proof of what I say, just read that letter."

CHAPTER XXVII.

TARBOX TO THE RESCUE.

THUS invited, Mr. Abercrombie read the letter of Mr. Craven, in which he referred to the possibility of an accident befalling Frank.

"What does this prove?" asked the reader, looking up.

"It proves that Sharpley pushed Frank over the cliff," said Mr. Tarbox, excitedly.

"I don't see that it does."

"Don't you see how he speaks of what is to be done if an accident happens?"

"Yes, but—"

"Doesn't that show that he expects it?"

"But we must establish a motive. What reason could Mr. Craven have for the murder of his step-son?"

"I'll tell you, for Frank told me all about

it. Frank's got money, and so has his mother, but Frank's got the most. If he dies, his property goes to his mother. His loss will kill her, for she's delicate, so Frank says, and then this Craven will step into the whole of it. Don't you see?"

"There is something in that," said Mr. Abercrombie, thoughtfully. "Indeed, it would explain a part of Colonel Sharpley's conduct on the day of the accident."

"What did he do?" asked Mr. Tarbox, eagerly.

"I invited him to accompany my son and myself on an excursion. He refused, saying that he didn't feel like the exertion of an ascent. Then I invited Frank to accompany us, but he refused to let him go. He said he might take a short tramp, and wanted his company."

"The skunk!"

"Again, though urged afterward to take a guide, he refused to do so, but took a long walk—he and the boy being alone."

"I'd like to wring his neck!" ejaculated Jonathan.

"Besides, Frank could not have fallen unless he was very imprudent. Now, he never struck me as a rash or heedless boy."

"He wasn't."

"It doesn't seem at all like him voluntarily to place himself in such peril, yet Colonel Sharpley says he did."

"He lies, the murderous skunk!"

"It did not strike me at first, but I fear that you are right, and that the poor boy has been foully dealt with."

"Isn't there any hope?" asked Mr. Tarbox, blowing his nose violently in order to get a chance to wipe away the tears which the supposed sad fate of our hero called forth. "How high was the hill?"

"I fear there is no hope. We searched for the body, but did not find it."

"Then he may be living," said Mr. Tarbox, brightening up.

"There is hardly a chance of it, I should say," returned Mr. Abercrombie, gravely.

"The descent was deep and precipitous."

"Where is the villain Sharpley?"

"He left the next day. He said he should

hurry back to America to carry the sad news to the parents of the poor boy."

"And get his pay from Craven."

"I hope, Mr. Tarbox, that your suspicions are groundless. I should be very unwilling to believe in such wickedness."

"I hope so, too. If it was an accident I should think it was the will of God; but if that villain has murdered him I know it ain't. I wish I could overhaul Sharpley."

"What do you propose to do, Mr. Tarbox?"

"I'll tell you, Mr. Abercrombie. Fust and foremost, I'm going to that place where the accident happened, and I mean to find Frank dead or alive. If he's dead, I'll try to find out if he was murdered or not. If he's alive, I'll take care of him, and he'll tell me all about it."

"Mr. Tarbox," said the other, taking his hand, "I respect you for the strength of your attachment to the poor lad. I saw but little of him, but enough to be assured that he was a bold, manly boy, of a noble nature and a kind disposition. Pardon me for the offer I

am about to make, but I hope you will allow me to pay the expenses of this investigation. You give your time; let me give my money, which is of less value."

"Thank you, Mr. Abercrombie," said Mr. Tarbox. "You're a gentleman; but I've got a little money, and I'd just as lief use it for Frank. I'll pay my own expenses."

"At any rate, I will give you my address, and if you get short of money I hope you will apply to me without fail."

"I will, squire," said Jonathan.

So they parted.

Mr. Tarbox set out immediately for the Hotel du Glacier.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SAVED AS BY A MIRACLE.

BUT where all this while was Frank? Had he really fallen a victim to the murderous designs of his treacherous guardian? My readers have been kept too long in suspense as to his fate.

At the moment of falling he was fully conscious, but too late, of his companion's treachery. In that terrible moment there flashed upon him a full knowledge of the plot of which he was a victim, and he had time to connect with it his step-father as the prime author and instigator of the deed. It was indeed a terrible experience. In the full flush of youthful life and strength the gates of death swung open before him, and he gave himself up for lost, resigning himself to his fearful fate as well as he could.

But there was one thought of anguish—his mother! How would she grieve over his untimely death! And the wretch who had instigated his murder, would he stop short, content, or would he next assail her?

In times of danger the mind acts quickly. All these thoughts passed through the mind of our hero as he fell, but all at once there was a violent shock. He had stopped falling, yet he was not dead, only stunned. There was a ledge part way down, a hollow filled with soft snow—making a natural bed, and it was upon this that he had fallen. Yet, soft as it was, the shock was sufficient to deprive him of consciousness.

When he became sensible of surrounding objects—that is, when his consciousness returned—he looked about him in bewilderment.

Where was he?

Not surely on the ledge, for, looking around him, he saw the walls of a small and humble apartment, scantily provided with needful furniture. He was lying upon a bed, a poor wooden bedstead. There was another person

in the room—a woman, so humbly attired that he knew she was a Swiss peasant.

“Where am I?” he asked, bewildered.

The woman turned quickly, and her homely, sun-browned face glowed with pleasure.

“You are awake, monsieur?” she said, in the French language.

I have already said that Frank was a French scholar, and could understand the language to a limited extent, as well as speak it somewhat. He understood her, and answered in French:

“Yes, madame, I am awake. Will you kindly tell me where I am?”

“You met with an accident, monsieur. My husband and my brother were upon the mountain, and found you on a ledge covered with snow.”

“I remember,” said Frank, shuddering. “When was that?”

“Yesterday. You have slept since then. How do you feel?”

“I feel sore and bruised. Are any of my limbs broken?”

He moved his arms and legs, but, to his great joy, ascertained that though sore, no bones were broken.

"It was a wonderful escape," said the woman. "You must have fallen from the cliff above."

"I did."

"But for falling on the ledge, you would have been killed."

"Yes," answered Frank, "but Heaven be thanked, I have escaped."

"How did you fall?" asked the woman. "That was what my husband and my brother, Antoine, could not understand. You must have been leaning over."

Frank paused.

"I cannot tell you now," he answered. "Perhaps I will soon."

"When you please, monsieur, but you must be hungry."

"I am indeed hungry, madame. I suppose it is more than twenty-four hours since I have tasted anything."

"Poor boy!" said the woman, compassionately. "I will at once get you something to

eat. We are poor people, monsieur, and you may not like our plain fare."

"Don't speak of it, madame. You are only too kind to me. I can eat anything."

Frank had only spoken the truth. He was almost famished; and when the food was set before him, plain as it was, he ate with eager satisfaction, to the evident pleasure of his kindly hostess. But in sitting up, he realized by the soreness of his limbs and the aching of his back, that though no bones were broken, he was far from being in a condition to get up. It was with a feeling of relief that he sank back upon the bed, and with listless eyes watched the movements of his hostess. He was not equal to the exertion of forming plans for the future.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FRANK'S PEDESTRIAN TOUR.

ALTHOUGH Frank was pretty well bruised by his fall, his youth and the vigor of his constitution enabled him to recover rapidly from the effects of the shock. On the third day he got up and took a short walk. On the fifth day he felt well enough to leave his hospitable entertainers.

But where should he go?

Should he return to the Hotel du Glacier and place himself again in the clutches of his treacherous guardian? He felt that to be out of the question. Besides, he rightly conjectured that Sharpley had already left the hotel. No, he must detach himself wholly from his enemy. He must rely upon himself. He must get home the best way he could, and then expose the conspirators, for he was convinced that Mr. Craven was involved in it. But a serious difficulty presented itself.

He was about four thousand miles from home, and to return, as well as to stay where he was, required money. This led him to an examination of his finances. He never carried much money with him. Sharpley being treasurer. Opening his pocket-book, he found he had sixty francs only, or about twelve dollars in gold. Now, as my readers will readily judge, twelve dollars is hardly adequate for a return journey from Switzerland to America.

Had Frank been dismayed at this situation it would hardly have created surprise, but, on the contrary, he felt in very good spirits.

"I don't believe I shall starve," he said to himself. "If I can only get to Paris, I will seek out Mr. Tarbox, and I am sure he will lend me money enough to get home."

But had he enough to get to Paris? Barely enough to travel third class; but then he must remember the good people who had found and taken care of him. For this alone, twelve dollars was inadequate. But he could take their names, and promise to send them more from America.

His difficulty would have been far less great

had he known that at that very moment Mr. Tarbox had just arrived at the Hotel du Glacier in search of him, prepared to help him to the best of his ability. But of this he knew nothing.

So, on the morning of the fifth day, Frank announced to his humble friends that he must leave them.

"But are you strong enough, monsieur?" asked the peasant's wife.

"Oh, yes, madame; thanks to your kind care, I am quite recovered."

"And monsieur will go to his friends?"

"I have no friends in Europe."

"What! so young and alone?"

"I did not come alone. I came in charge of a man whom I thought friendly, but it was he who threw me over the cliff and nearly killed me."

"Surely, monsieur is mistaken!" exclaimed the woman, astonished.

"No," answered Frank. "He is my enemy. It is a long story; but at home I am rich, and I think he is employed by my stepfather to kill me."

In answer to questions, Frank gave a general account of the circumstances to the worthy people, and closed by saying : " When I have returned to America, I shall send you suitable compensation for your kindness. Now, I can only give you enough to pay what you have expended for me."

He drew from his pocket two Napoleons (two-thirds of his available means), and insisted upon their acceptance. They at first refused to take the money, but finally accepted it.

Had they known that Frank would be left with but twenty francs himself, they would have taken nothing, but Americans abroad are popularly supposed to be even richer than they are, and it never occurred to them to suspect our hero's present poverty.

They stood in the doorway, watching him as he started off with a firm step, and a heart almost as light as his purse, and heartily joined in the wish, " Bon voyage, monsieur."

Frank waved his hat, smiling, and set out on his way.

Had our hero been well provided with money, nothing could have been more agreeable than a pedestrian journey amid the beautiful scenery of the Alps. Even as it was, Frank felt the exhilarating influences of the fresh morning air and the grand scenery, visible on all sides, for he was hemmed in by mountains.

His proposed terminus being Paris, he kept a general northwesterly course, making inquiries when at all at a loss as to the road.

At midday he found himself in a little village. By this time he was hungry. He did not go to a hotel. He felt that his slender store of money would not justify it. He stopped, instead, at a cottage, and for a few cents obtained a pint of milk and a small loaf. This fare was plain enough, but appetite is the best sauce, and his hunger made it taste delicious.

He rested for three hours, then, when the sun's rays were less powerful, he resumed his journey.

At seven o'clock in the evening he had ac-

complished about twenty-five miles, and was foot-sore and weary. He selected another cottage, and made application for supper and a bed.

"Monsieur will do better to go to the hotel," said the peasant. "We are poor people, and our accommodations are too humble for a gentleman like monsieur."

Frank smiled. He saw that they judged of his means by his clothing, which was of fine texture and fashionable cut, for he had purchased a traveling suit in London.

"I have been robbed of nearly all my money," he explained (this was true, for it was in Sharpley's possession), "and I cannot afford to go to the hotel. If you will let me stay here, I will gladly accept what accommodations you have to offer."

"Oh, in that case, monsieur," said the peasant's wife, cheerfully, "you are quite welcome. Come right in."

Frank entered. He soon had set before him a supper of bread, milk and honey, to which he did ample justice. Then he asked permission to bathe his feet, which were

sore. At nine o'clock he went to bed, and, as might have been expected, enjoyed a sound sleep, which refreshed him not a little.

I have described this one day as a specimen of the manner in which Frank traveled. The charges were so small that he made his money go a long way. But the stock was so small that it steadily became less with formidable rapidity, and our young hero found himself with poverty staring him in the face. He had traveled over a hundred miles, nearly a hundred and fifty, when, on counting his money, he found that he had but forty cents (or two francs) left. This was a serious state of things.

"What shall I do?" thought Frank, as he sat down by the wayside to reflect on his situation. "To-morrow I shall be penniless, and I must be six or seven hundred miles from Paris, more or less. One thing is certain, I can't travel for nothing. What shall I do?"

Frank reflected that if he were in America he would seek for a job at sawing wood, or any other kind of unskilled labor for which

he was competent. He could hire himself out for a month, till he could obtain money enough to prosecute his journey. But it was evident that there was very little chance of this resource here. The peasants at whose cottages he stopped were poor in money; they had none to spare, and they did their own work. Besides, it was not likely that his services would be worth much to them. There was one thing he might do. He might remain over a few days somewhere, and write meanwhile to Jonathan Tarbox, in Paris, asking him to send him fifty francs or so. But, somehow, Frank did not like to do this. As we know, it would have done no good, as Mr. Tarbox was now in Switzerland seeking him. He felt that he would like to make his way to Paris unaided if possible. But how to do it was a difficult problem.

He was plunged in deep reflection on this point when his attention was called to a boy of seven, who came running past crying and sobbing.

"*Qu'avez vous ?*" asked Frank; or, "What is the matter with you?"

"Oh, I can't understand French," said the boy.

"What is the matter?" asked our hero, in English.

"I am lost," was the reply. "I don't know where papa or sister is."

"Don't cry. I will help you to find them. But, first, tell me what is your name, and how you happened to get lost."

"My name is Herbert Grosvenor," answered the little fellow.

He went on to say that his father was a London merchant, who was traveling with himself and his sister Beatrice. He had walked out in charge of a servant, but the latter had stopped at an inn and became drunk. Then he became so violent that Herbert was afraid and ran away. But he was too young to know the road, and had lost his way.

"I shall never see my papa again," he sobbed.

"Oh, yes, you will," said Frank, encouragingly. "I will take you to him. Do you remember where he is stopping?"

The boy was luckily able to answer correctly that his father was stopping at the Hotel de la Couronne, in a large town, which Frank knew to be only two miles distant.

"Come, Herbert," he said, cheerfully, "I will carry you back to your father. Take my hand, and we will set out at once, if you are not tired."

"Oh, no, I am not tired. I can walk," said the little boy, brightening up, and putting his hand with confidence in that of his young protector.

CHAPTER XXX.

NEW FRIENDS.

WHEN Frank arrived at the hotel with his young charge he found the Grosvenor family in great dismay. The servant had returned, evidently under the influence of liquor, quite unable to give any account of the little boy. A party, headed by Mr. Grosvenor, was about starting out in search of him, when he made his appearance, clinging trustfully to the hand of our hero.

"Oh, you naughty runaway!" said his sister Beatrice, a lovely girl of twelve, folding Herbert in a sisterly embrace. "How you have frightened us!"

"I couldn't help it, sister," said Herbert.

"What made you run away from Thomas, my boy?" asked his father.

"I was afraid of him," said Herbert. "He was so strange."

The cause of the strange conduct was evi-

dent enough to any one who saw the servant's present condition, for he was too stupefied even to defend himself.

"It's a shame, father," said Beatrice. "Only think, our darling little Herbie might have been lost. I hope you will never trust him again with Thomas."

"I shall not," said the father, decidedly. "Thomas has forfeited my confidence, and he must leave my service. I shall pay his passage back to London, and there he must shift for himself."

"You have not thanked the young gentleman who brought him back, father," said Beatrice, in a low voice.

Mr. Grosvenor turned to Frank.

"Accept my warmest thanks, young gentleman," he said, "for your kindness to my little son."

"It was only a trifle, sir," said our hero, modestly.

"It was no trifle to us. How did you happen to meet him?"

"I was resting by the road-side, when he came along, crying. I asked him what was

the matter, and he told me. Then I offered to guide him to you."

"And thereby relieved our deep anxiety. We were very much frightened when Thomas returned without him."

"I don't wonder, sir."

"You are English, I infer," said Mr. Grosvenor.

"No, sir; I am an American."

"You are not traveling alone—at your age?" said the merchant, in surprise.

"I was not—that is, I came from America with another person, but I parted from him in Switzerland."

Frank refrained from explaining under what circumstances he parted from Sharpley, partly from a natural reluctance to revive so unpleasant a subject, partly because he did not like to trouble the Grosvenors with his affairs.

"It must be lonely traveling without friends," said Mr. Grosvenor. "My daughter and I would feel glad to have you join our party."

"Oh, yes, papa!" said Beatrice.

Frank turned towards the beautiful girl who spoke so impulsively, and he could not help feeling that it would indeed be a pleasure to travel in her society. I don't mean to represent him as in love, for at his age that would be foolish; but he had never had a sister, and it seemed to him that he would have been glad to have such a sister as Beatrice. But how could he, with less than forty sous to defray his traveling expenses, join the party of a wealthy London merchant? Had he the money that rightfully belonged to him, now in Sharpley's hands, there would have been no difficulty.

"You hesitate," said Mr. Grosvenor. "Perhaps it would interfere with your plans to go with us."

"No, sir; it is not that," and Frank hesitated again.

It was an embarrassing moment, but he decided quickly to make the merchant acquainted with his circumstances.

"If you will favor me with five minutes' private conversation," he said, "I will tell you why I hesitate."

"Certainly," said Mr. Grosvenor, politely, and led the way into the hotel.

The nature of Frank's explanation is, of course, anticipated by the reader. He related, as briefly as possible, the particulars of Sharp-ley's plot. The merchant listened with surprise.

"This is certainly a singular story," he said, "and you have been treated with the blackest treachery. Do you know, or do you guess, what has become of this man?"

"I don't know. I think he has started to return to America, or will do so soon."

"And what are your plans?"

"I mean to go to Paris. There I have a friend who I think will help me—an American with whom I became acquainted on the voyage over."

"I suppose you are poorly provided with money?"

"I have less than two francs left," Frank acknowledged.

The merchant looked amazed.

"You were actually reduced to that?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"How did you expect to get to Paris?"

Frank smiled.

"That is what puzzled me," he owned. "I was sitting by the roadside thinking how I should accomplish it when your little boy came along."

Now it was Mr. Grosvenor's turn to smile.

"He solved it," he said.

"Who, sir?" asked Frank.

"My little boy," said Mr. Grosvenor, still smiling.

"I don't understand," said our hero, puzzled.

"I mean that Herbert shall act as your banker. That is, on account of your kindness to him, I propose to add you to my party, and advance you such sums as you may require."

"You are very kind, sir," said Frank, relieved and grateful. "I really don't know what I should have done without some such assistance."

"Then it is arranged, and you will join us at dinner, which is already ordered. I will order a room to be made ready for you."

"I hope, sir, you will excuse my dress," said Frank, who, it must be confessed, might have looked neater. He had walked for several days, and was in consequence very dusty. Then again, his shirt and collar had been worn ever since his accident, and were decidedly dirty.

"I am ashamed of my appearance, sir," continued our hero; "but Colonel Sharpley's treachery compelled me to travel without my trunk, and I have not even a change of linen."

Mr. Grosvenor could not forbear smiling.

"You are certainly in an awkward condition," he said. "I will apologize for you to Beatrice, the only lady of our party, and we will see after dinner if we cannot repair your loss."

Frank used a brush diligently, and succeeded in making his outer clothes presentable; but, alas! no brush could restore the original whiteness of his dingy linen; and he flushed crimson as he entered the dining-room, and by direction of Mr. Grosvenor took a seat next to Beatrice, who looked so fresh

and rosy and clean as to make the contrast even more glaring. But her cordial greeting soon put him at ease.

"Papa has been telling me of that horrid man who tried to kill you," she commenced. "What a wretch he must be!"

"I think he is one," said Frank; "but until the accident happened—that is, till he pushed me over the cliff—I had no idea of his design."

"And he left you without any money, didn't he?"

"With very little—just what I happened to have about me. I paid most of that to the peasant who found me and took care of me."

"Didn't you almost starve?"

"No; but my meals were very plain. I didn't dare to eat as much as I would have liked."

"And I suppose that horrid man has gone off with your money?" said Beatrice, indignantly.

"Yes, miss."

"Her name isn't miss," said little Herbert. "It's Beatrice."

"Herbert is right," said Beatrice, smiling. "I am not a young lady yet—I am only twelve."

"Then," said our hero, who was fast getting to feel at home in his new surroundings, "as I am not a young gentleman yet, I suppose you will call me Frank."

"I will call you Frank," said Herbert.

"Then I suppose I must do so to be in fashion," said Beatrice, laughing.

"I certainly don't look like a young gentleman in these dirty clothes," said our hero.

"Perhaps Herbert will lend me a suit?"

"I think," said Mr. Grosvenor, "we shall be able to refit you without drawing from Herbert's wardrobe."

So the conversation went on, and our hero, before the dinner closed, found himself entirely at his ease in spite of his soiled clothes.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW THE NEWS WENT HOME.

FRANK had one source of anxiety and embarrassment connected with his recent adventure which had occupied a considerable space of his thoughts.

It was this. How could he let his mother know that he was still alive without its coming to the knowledge of Mr. Craven? Convinced, as he was, that his step-father was at the bottom of the treacherous plot to which he had nearly fallen a victim, he wished him to suppose that it had succeeded in order to see what course he would pursue in consequence. His subsequent course would confirm his share in the plot or relieve him from any complicity, and Frank wanted to know, once for all, whether he was to regard his step-father as a disguised and dangerous foe or not. But he was not willing that his mother should

rest long under the impression that he had perished among the Alps. In her delicate state of health he feared that it would prove too much for her, and that it might bring on a fit of sickness. He wished, therefore, in some way, to communicate to her secretly the knowledge that he had escaped. But if he wrote Mr. Craven would see the letter or know that one had been received. Evidently, therefore, he could not write directly to her.

After some perplexity, he saw a way out of the difficulty.

He had recently received a letter from his old friend and school companion, Ben Cameron, stating that the latter had gone to Wakefield, ten miles distant, to spend two months with an uncle, and asking Frank to direct his next letter there. It flashed upon our hero that he could write to Ben, giving him an account of what had happened, and asking him to acquaint his mother secretly, saying nothing of this letter in case he should hear that he, Frank, was dead.

The day after he joined the Grosvenor

party he carried out this plan, writing a long letter to Ben, which terminated as follows:

"I feel sure that Mr. Craven is at the bottom of this attempt upon my life, and I think that his plan is to get possession of my money. He knows that mother's health would be very much affected by the news of any fatal accident to me, and that she would easily be induced to put all business into his hands. He would find it very easy to cheat a woman. You may ask why Colonel Sharpley should be induced to join in such a plot. That I can't tell, but I think he is not very rich, and that Mr. Craven has offered to divide with him in case they succeed. Otherwise, I can think of no motive he could have for attempting to kill me. We have always been on good terms so far as I know. *odys*

"I may be wrong in all this, but I don't think I am. I suppose Colonel Sharpley has written home that I am dead, and I think that he will soon go to America to receive his pay for the deed. Now, Ben, as you are my friend, I want you to manage to see my mother privately, and tell her that I am well—perfectly well—that I have escaped almost by a miracle, and that though without money, I have found friends who will supply all my needs and give me money to return to America. She is not to let anybody know that she has heard from me, but to wait till I come home, as I shall soon. Especially

if Mr. Craven tries to get hold of my property, tell mother to resist and refuse utterly to allow it. I advise her also to take care how she trusts Mr. Craven with her own money.

"I shall not write you again, Ben, for fear my letters might be seen. But some day I shall come home unexpectedly. Let mother see this letter and then destroy it.

"Your affectionate friend,

"FRANK HUNTER."

It was fortunate that Frank wrote this letter; but we must precede it, and, after a long interval, look in upon the home he had left.

One day Mr. Craven took from the village post-office a letter.

He opened it eagerly, and, as he read it, his face showed the gratification which he felt. But lest this should be noticed, he immediately smoothed his face and assumed a look of grave and hypocritical sadness.

This was the letter:

"DEAR MR CRAVEN:—It is with great sorrow that I sit down to write you this letter. I would, if I could, commit to another hand the task of communicating the terrible news which I have to impart. Not to keep you longer in suspense, your step-son,

Frank Hunter, met with a fatal accident yesterday, while ascending the Alps with me. He approached too near the edge of a precipice, though I warned him of his danger, and insisted on looking over. Whether he became dizzy or slipped I cannot explain, but, to my horror, a moment later I saw the unfortunate boy slip over the edge and fall into the terrible abyss. I sprang forward, hoping to catch him, but was too late. I nearly fell over myself in the vain attempt to save him. I almost wish I had done so; for, though the act was the result of his own imprudence, I cannot help feeling responsible. I ought to have exercised my authority and forcibly restrained him from drawing near the fatal brink. Yet I did not like to be too strict with a boy of his age; I feared he would dislike me. But I wish I had run that risk. Anything would have been better than to feel that I might have saved him and neglected to do it.

"I sympathize deeply with you and his mother in your sorrow at this bereavement. I shall sail for America in two or three weeks, in order to give Mrs. Craven and yourself a detailed account of this calamity. I will bring home what things I have of Frank's, thinking that it may be a sad satisfaction to his mother to have them.

"I cannot write further. I have a terrible headache, and am completely used up by the sad scene through which I have passed.

"Yours truly,

"SHARPLEY."

Mr. Craven took out this letter and read it a second time on his way home.

"That's a good letter," he said to himself, sardonically, "so full of sympathy, regret, and that sort of thing. I couldn't have done it better myself, and I have rather a talent for such things. Egad! Sharpley has surpassed himself. I didn't give the fellow credit for so much hypocrisy. So he's coming to America to give us a detailed account of this calamity, is he? I know why he's coming. It's to get pay for his share of the plot. Well, if all goes well, I can afford to pay him well, though I really think his price was too high. Now that the young one is out of the way, I must manage his mother, so as to get his property into my hands. Forty thousand dollars! It will relieve me from all money cares for the rest of my life."

As Mr. Craven approached the house, his face assumed a grave and sorrowful expression. He was preparing to inflict a crushing blow upon the devoted mother, who was even then counting the days to the probable return of her beloved boy.

Entering the house, he met Katy in the hall.

"Is your mistress in?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; she's up stairs. Have you heard from Frank, sir?"

"Yes, Katy," he answered in a significantly doleful tone.

"Is anything the matter of him, sir?" asked Katy, taking the hint.

"Oh, Katy, I've heard bad news," said Mr. Craven, pulling out his white handkerchief, and elaborately wiping his eyes.

"Bad news! What is it, sir?" demanded Katy.

"I can't tell it," wailed Mr. Craven.

"Spit it out like a man!" exclaimed Katy, impatiently. "Is the dear boy sick?"

"Worse."

"He ain't dead!" ejaculated Katy, horror-struck.

"Yes, he is; he fell over a precipice in the Alps, and was instantly killed."

"What's a precipice, sir?"

"He was on a steep hill and he slipped over the edge."

Katy uttered a loud shriek, and sank on the lower stair, and throwing her apron over her face, began to utter what can only be designated as howls of grief.

Mrs. Craven from above was drawn to the head of the landing by what she heard.

"What's the matter?" she asked, in affright.

"Oh! it's Master Frank, mum. He's kilt dead, he is!"

"Is this true?" ejaculated Mrs. Craven, looking toward her husband with pale face.

"Yes, my dear."

There was a low shriek, and the poor mother sank to the floor in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BEN BRINGS GOOD NEWS.

THE news of Frank's death—or supposed death—was a terrible shock to Mrs. Craven. She was of a nervous organization, and her attachment to her son was the greater because he was her only child. She felt that after his death she would have nothing left worth living for. All her future plans and prospects of happiness were connected with him. Her husband, as we know, was nothing to her. She had married him partly because she thought he might be useful to Frank.

“I wish I could die, Katy,” she wailed, addressing her faithful attendant.

In this hour of her affliction, Katy was nearer to her than Mr. Craven.

“Don't say that, missis,” said Katy, sobbing herself the while.

"What have I to live for, now that my poor boy is dead?" And she indulged in a fresh outburst of grief. "My heart is broken, Katy."

"So is mine, mum—broke right in two!" answered Katy, sympathetically.

"To think that my poor boy should have met with such a terrible death."

"He never knew what hurt him, mum. That's one comfort."

"But I shall never see him again, Katy," said the poor mother, sobbing.

"Yes, you will, mum—in heaven."

"Then I hope I shall go there soon. Oh, I wish I had never let him go."

"So do I, mum. He was so bright when he went away, poor lad. He little thought what was coming."

It was a comfort to Mrs. Craven in her distress to speak to Katy, whose devotion she knew. To Mr. Craven she did not feel like speaking much. She knew that Frank had never liked him, and this closed her lips. She even, poor woman, accused herself for marrying again, since, had she not done so, Frank

would not have gone abroad, and would still be spared to her.

Mr. Craven wisely kept out of the way for a time. He wanted to introduce business matters, and so carry out the concluding portion of his arrangement, but he felt that it would be impolitic to do it at once. Mrs. Craven was in no frame of mind to give attention to such things. He could wait, though it was irksome to do so.

Several days passed. Mrs. Craven's sharp sorrow had given way to a dull feeling of utter despondency. She kept to her room the greater part of the time, looking as if she had just emerged from a lengthened sickness. Mr. Craven wandered about the village, suppressing his good spirits with difficulty when he was at home, and assuming an expression of sympathetic sadness. But, when by himself, he would rub his hands and congratulate himself on the near accomplishment of his plans.

One day, when matters were in this state of depression, Ben Cameron knocked at the door. He had received Frank's letter, and

had come over at once to deliver his message.

The door was opened by Katy, who knew Ben well as the most intimate friend of our hero.

"Oh, Ben, we've had bad news," said Katy, wiping her eyes.

"Yes, I've heard it," said Ben. "How is Mrs. Craven?"

"Poor lady! she's struck down wid grief. It's killin' her. She doted on that boy."

"Can I see her?" asked Ben.

"She don't feel like seein' anybody."

"I think she'll see me, because I was Frank's friend."

"May be she will. She know'd you was always intimate friends."

"Is Mr. Craven at home?"

"No. Did you want to see him?"

"No. I wanted to see Mrs. Craven alone."

"You don't like him no better'n I do," said Katy.

"I hate him!" exclaimed Ben, energetically, bearing in mind Frank's suspicions that

Mr. Craven was concerned in the attack upon him.

"Good on your head!" said Katy, whose manners and education did not preclude her making occasional use of the slang of the day. "I'll go up and see if my missis will see you."

She returned almost immediately.

"Come right up," she said. "She'll be glad to see Frank's friend."

When Ben entered the room where Mrs. Craven, pale and wasted, sat in a rocking-chair, she burst into tears. The sight of Ben brought her boy more vividly to mind.

"How do you do, Mrs. Craven?" said Ben.

"My heart is broken, Benjamin," she answered, sadly. "You have heard of my poor boy's death?"

"Yes, I have heard of it."

"You were his friend. You know how good he was."

"Yes, Frank is the best fellow I know," said Ben, warmly.

"You say is. Alas! you forget that he is no more."

Katy had descended to the kitchen. Ben looked cautiously around him.

"Mrs. Craven," he said, "can you keep a secret?"

She looked surprised.

"Yes," she answered, faintly.

"I am going to tell you something which must be kept secret for awhile. Can you bear good news? Frank is alive!"

"Alive!" exclaimed the mother, jumping from her chair, and fixing her eyes imploringly, almost incredulously, on her visitor.

"Yes. Don't be agitated, Mrs. Craven. I have received a letter from him."

"Is it true? Oh, tell me quickly. Didn't he fall over the precipice?"

"Yes, he fell, but it was on a soft spot, and he was saved."

"Heaven be praised! Bless you for bringing such news. Tell me all about it."

Ben told the story in a few words, and then showed the letter. How it eased and comforted the poor mother's heart I need not say. She felt as if life had been restored to her once more.

"You see, Mrs. Craven, that there is need of silence and secrecy. We cannot tell whether Frank's suspicions have any foundation or not. We must wait and see."

"Do you think Mr. Craven could have had anything to do with the wicked plot?" exclaimed Mrs. Craven, indignantly.

"Frank thinks so."

"I will tax him with it. If he framed such a plot he shall answer for it."

"Hush, Mrs. Craven. Remember Frank's wish. It will defeat his plans."

"It is true. I forgot. But how can I live in the same house with a man who sought the life of my poor boy?"

"We are not sure of it."

"Do not fear. I will do as my boy wishes. But I may tell him that I do not think he is dead?"

"Yes, if you give no reason."

"And I should like to tell Katy. She, poor girl, loves Frank almost as much as I do."

"Do you think Katy can keep it secret?"

"Yes, if I ask her to, and tell her it is Frank's wish."

"Then I think you can venture. I will take the letter and destroy it, as Frank wanted me to."

"Don't destroy it. You can keep it where no one will see it."

When Ben went out he told Katy that her mistress wished to see her. She went up, and to her surprise found that Mrs. Craven had thrown open the blind of the hitherto darkened chamber, and actually received her with a smile.

Katy looked bewildered.

"Come here, Katy," said her mistress. Then she whispered in Katy's ear, "Katy, he's alive!"

"What!" exclaimed the handmaiden, incredulously.

"Yes, it's true. He's written to Ben. But you must keep it secret. Sit down, and I'll tell you all about it."

"Oh, the ould villain!" was Katy's comment upon the story. "I'd like to wring his neck," meaning Mr. Craven's.

"You must be careful, Katy. He isn't to know we've heard anything."

"But he'll guess from your lavin' off mournin'."

"I'll tell him I have dreamed that my boy escaped."

"That'll do, mum. When will Master Frank be comin' home?"

"Soon, I hope, but now I can wait patiently since Heaven has spared him to me."

When Mr. Craven returned home at the close of the afternoon, he was astonished to hear Katy singing at her work, and to find Mrs. Craven dressed and down stairs, quite self-controlled, though grave. In the morning she was in the depths of despondency, and Katy was gloomy and sad.

"What's up?" he thought.

"My dear," he said, "I am glad that you are bearing your affliction better. It is a terrible loss, but we should be resigned to the will of the Almighty."

"I don't think Frank is dead," answered Mrs. Craven.

"Not think he is dead? I wish there were any chance of your being right, but I cannot encourage you in such a delusion. There is,

unhappily, no chance of the poor boy surviving such a fearful accident."

"You may call it foolish, if you will, Mr. Craven, but I have a presentiment that he is alive."

"But, my dear, it is impossible."

"Katy thinks so, too."

Mr. Craven shrugged his shoulders.

"I wish it were true, but there is no hope. You saw my friend's letter?"

"Yes."

"He said there was no hope."

"He thought so. I am firmly convinced that Frank is alive."

Mr. Craven tried to undermine her confidence, but, of course, without avail. He was troubled, for if she continued to cherish this belief she would not take possession of Frank's fortune, and thus he would be cut off from it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ALPINE EXPLORATIONS OF MR. TARBOX.

ARRIVED at the Hotel du Glacier, Mr. Tarbox immediately instituted inquiries about the fate of Frank, and soon learned all that was known by the people at the inn. Being a decidedly straightforward person, he did not fail to insinuate, or rather to make direct charges, against Sharpley, but these found no credence. Sharpley's hypocritical sorrow, and his plausible explanation, had imposed upon them, and they informed Mr. Tarbox that Colonel Sharpley was an excellent gentleman, and was deeply affected by the accident which had befallen Monsieur Frank.

"Deeply affected—in a horn!" returned the disgusted Jonathan.

"In a horn!" repeated the landlord, with a perplexed expression. "What is it to be deeply affected in a horn?"

"Over the left, then," amended Mr. Tarbox, impatiently.

"I do not understand over the left," said the other.

"Look here, my friend. Where was you raised?" demanded Mr. Tarbox.

"Raised?"

"Yes; brought up—born."

"I was born here, among these mountains, monsieur."

"Did you ever go to school?"

"To school—a *l'cole*? *Certainement*. I am not one ignorant person," said the landlord, beginning to get angry.

"And you never learned 'in a horn,' or 'over the left?'"

"*Non, monsieur.*"

"Then," said Mr. Tarbox, "it is high time the schools in Switzerland were reorganized. I should like to speak to your school committee."

"School committee?"

"Yes. You have a school committee, haven't you?"

"*Non, monsieur.*"

"That accounts for it. You need a smart school committee to see that the right things are taught in your schools. But about Frank—has his body been found?"

"*Non, monsieur.*"

"Not been found! Why not?"

"We have looked for it, but we cannot find it."

"Poor boy!" said Mr. Tarbox, wiping away a tear. "So he has been left all the time lying dead in some hole in the mountains."

"We have looked for him."

"Then you didn't look sharp. I'll look for him myself, and when I've found the poor boy I'll give him decent burial. I'd rather bury that skunk Sharpley a darned sight. I'd bury him with pleasure, and I wouldn't grudge the expense of the coffin. Now tell me where the poor boy fell."

"My son Baptiste shall go and show monsieur the way."

"All right. It don't make any difference to me if he is a Baptist. I'm a Methodist myself, and there ain't much difference, I guess.

So just tell the Baptist to hurry up and we'll set out. What's his name?"

"My son's name?"

"Yes."

"Did I not say it was Baptiste?"

"Oh, that's his name, is it? I thought it was his religion. Funny name, ain't it? But that makes no difference."

Baptiste was soon ready, and the two set out together. The guide found it rather difficult to follow Mr. Tarbox in his eccentric remarks, but they got on very well together, and after a time stood on the fatal ledge.

"Here it was the poor boy fell off," said Baptiste.

"I don't believe it," said Mr. Tarbox. "The boy wasn't a fool, and he couldn't have fell unless he was—it was that skunk, Sharpley, that pushed him off."

"Monsieur Sharpley was deeply grieved. How could he push him off?"

It will be remembered that Sharpley left a sum of money in the hands of the guide to defray the burial expenses in case Frank's

body was found. This naturally made an impression in his favor on Baptiste's mind, particularly as the money had not been required, and the probability was that he would be free to convert it to his own use. Accordingly, both he and his father were ready to defend the absent Sharpley against the accusations of Mr. Tarbox.

"How could he push him off? Jest as easy as winking," replied Jonathan. "Jest as easy as I could push you off," and Mr. Tarbox placed his hand on the guide's shoulder.

Baptiste jumped back in affright.

"Why, you didn't think I was goin' to do it, you jackass!" said the Yankee. "You're scared before you're hurt. I only wanted to show you how it could be done. Now, jest hold on to my coat-tail while I look over."

"Monsieur had better lie down and look over. It is more safe."

"I don't know but you're right, Baptiste," and Mr. Tarbox proceeded to follow his advice.

"It's a pesky ways to fall," he said, after a pause. "Poor Frank! it don't seem as if there was much chance of his bein' alive."

"No, monsieur. He is doubtless dead!"

"Then, where is his body? It is strange that it is not found."

"Yes, it is strange."

"I mean to look for it myself. Is there any way to get down here?"

"Yes, but it is a long way."

"Never mind that. We will try it. I've got a good pair of legs, and I can hold out if you can."

"Very well, monsieur."

They accordingly descended and explored the chasm beneath, climbing part way up, looking everywhere for the remains of our hero, but, as we know, there was a very good reason why they were not found. Frank was, at that very moment, eating a hearty breakfast with his friends, the Grosvenors, in Coblenz, preparatory to crossing the river and ascending the heights of Ehrenbreitstein. He little dreamed that his Yankee friend was at that moment looking for his body. Had

Mr. Tarbox been able to see the said body, he would have been relieved from all apprehensions.

After continuing his search for the greater part of a day, Mr. Tarbox was obliged to give it up. Though possessed of a considerable share of physical strength, obtained by working on his father's farm from the age of ten, he was obliged to own that he was about "tuckered out." He was surprised to find that the guide appeared comparatively fresh.

"Ain't you tired, Baptiste?" he asked.

"*Non, monsieur.*"

"Well, that's strange. You're a little feller, compared with me. I could swaller you almost, and I'm as tired as a dog—clean tuckered out."

"I was born among these mountains, monsieur. I have always been accustomed to climbing among them; and that is the reason."

"I guess you're right, Baptiste. I don't think I shall take up the business of an Alpine guide jest yet. What sort of plows do you have in Switzerland, Baptiste?"

"I will show monsieur when we go back."

"All right. You see, Baptiste, I've invented a plow that goes ahead of all your old-fashioned concerns, and I'd like to introduce it into Switzerland."

"You can speak to my father, monsieur, I have nothing to do with the plowing."

Mr. Tarbox did speak to the landlord, after first expressing his disgust at the manner in which agricultural operations were carried on in Switzerland; but he soon found that the Swiss mind is not one that yearns for new inventions, and that the prospect of selling his patent in Switzerland for a good round sum was very small.

As he had failed in his search for Frank, and as there seemed no business inducements for remaining, he decided to leave the Hotel du Glacier and return at once to Paris. He did so with a heavy heart, for he really felt attached to Frank, and was grieved by his unhappy fate.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PLOW IS A SUCCESS.

THE Grosvenors traveled in a leisurely manner, stopping at places of interest on the way, so that they did not reach Paris for a fortnight.

Mr. Tarbox had been back over a week before Frank arrived at the Hotel du Louvre. Our hero had by this time got very well acquainted with his party, and the favorable impression which he at first made was considerably strengthened. Little Herbert took a great fancy to him, and Frank allowed the little boy to accompany him in many of his walks. Frequently, also, Beatrice was of the party. She, too, was much pleased with our hero, and treated him in a frank, sisterly way, which Frank found agreeable. Mr. Grosvenor noticed the intimacy established between his children and Frank, but he saw that our hero

was well brought up, and very polite and gentlemanly, and therefore was not displeased by it. In fact he was gratified, for he saw that it added considerably to the pleasure which they derived from the journey.

On the morning after their arrival in Paris Frank prepared to go out.

"Where are you going, Frank?" asked little Herbert.

Beatrice also looked up, inquiringly.

"To see a friend of mine, Herbert."

"What is his name?"

"It seems to me that you are inquisitive, Herbert," said his father.

"Oh, it is no secret," said Frank, laughing.

"It is Jonathan Tarbox, of Squashboro', State o' Maine."

"What a funny name!"

"Yes, it is a queer name, and its owner is a little queer, also, but he is a good fellow for all that. He is a genuine specimen of the Yankee, Mr. Grosvenor."

"I should like to see him," said Mr. Grosvenor, smiling. "Invite him to call."

"I will, sir, thank you. Though he is un-

polished, I believe you will find that he has something in him."

Mr. Tarbox was back in his place in the exposition building. He had not ceased to mourn for Frank. Still he felt in better spirits than usual, for he had had an interview with a wealthy American capitalist, who had looked into the merits of his plow, and half-promised that he would pay him ten thousand dollars for a half ownership of the patent. This would make Mr. Tarbox a man of great wealth in his native place (Squash-boro', State o' Maine), and enable him to triumph over his friends and relations, who had thought him a fool for going to the expense of a trip to Europe, when he might have invested the same sum in a small farm at home.

He was busily engaged in thinking over his prospects, when he was startled by a familiar voice.

"How do you do, Mr. Tarbox?" said Frank, saluting him.

"What!" gasped Mr. Tarbox, fixing his eyes upon our hero in a strange mixture of incredulity, wonder, bewilderment and joy.

"Why, Mr. Tarbox, you don't seem glad to see me," said Frank. "You haven't forgotten me, have you?"

"Are you alive?" asked Mr. Tarbox, cautiously, eying him askance.

"Alive? I rather think I am. Just give me your hand."

The Yankee mechanically extended his hand, and Frank gave him a grip which convinced him that he was flesh and blood.

"But I thought you were dead!"

"You see I am not."

"I saw the cliff where you tumbled off, and broke your neck."

"I got it mended again, said Frank, laughing. "But you say you saw the cliff. Have you been to Switzerland?"

"Yes. I mistrusted something was goin' to happen to you."

"How could you mistrust? What led to your suspicions?"

"A letter that your step-father wrote to that skunk, Sharpley, in which he talks about your meeting with an accident."

"But," inquired Frank, in surprise, "how

did you get hold of such a letter? I knew nothing about it."

"You left it here one day by accident."

"Where is it? Let me read it."

"First, let me ask you a question. Didn't that skunk push you off the cliff?"

"Yes," said Frank, gravely.

"And how did you escape?"

"Some peasants found me on a snow-covered ledge on which I had fallen. They took me home, and nursed me till I was well enough to travel."

"Are you with that skunk now?"

"No; I never would travel with him again," said Frank, shuddering.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. But let me have the letter."

He read in silence the paragraph which has been quoted in an earlier chapter. When he had finished he looked up.

"I am afraid," he said, gravely, "there is no doubt that Mr. Craven employed Colonel Sharpley to make away with me."

"Then he is a skunk, too!"

"Mr. Tarbox, I would not mind it so much but for one thing."

"What is that, Frank?"

"He is married to my mother. If he lays this plot for me, what will he do against her?"

"He will try to get hold of her money."

"I fear so, and if she resists I am afraid he will try to injure her."

"May be you're right, Frank."

"I think I ought to go home at once; don't you think so?"

"I don't know but you're right, Frank. I'm almost ready to go too."

"Oh, I forgot to ask you what luck you had met with."

"I expect I'll do first-rate. There's a gentleman that's talkin' of buyin' one-half my plow for ten thousand dollars."

"I congratulate you, Mr. Tarbox," said Frank, heartily; "I hope he'll do it."

"I guess he won't back out. He's been inquiren' about it pretty close. He thinks it's a big thing."

"I've no doubt he's right, Mr. Tarbox."

"It'll take the shine off all the plows that's goin'."

"Perhaps business will detain you, then, Mr. Tarbox."

"No, Mr. Peterson—that's his name—is goin' back to America in a week or two, and if he strikes a bargain I'll go too. Won't dad open his eyes when his son comes home with ten thousand dollars in his pocket? May be he won't think me quite such a fool as he thought when I started off for Europe, and wouldn't buy a farm, as he wanted me to, with that money I got as a legacy."

"But you will have half your patent also."

"Of course I will, and if that don't bring me in a fortun' it's because folks can't tell a good plow when they see it. But there's one thing I can't understand, Frank."

"What's that?"

"Where did you get all your money to travel after you got pitched over the precipice by that skunk?"

"Oh, I didn't tell you that. Well, after I was able to travel I examined my purse, and found I had only twelve dollars."

"That wa'n't much."

"No, particularly as I had to pay ten dollars to the good people who picked me up. I shall send them more as soon as I have it."

"Jest draw on me, Frank. I ain't rich, but ef you want a hundred dollars or more, jest say so."

"Thank you, Mr. Tarbox," said Frank, gratefully. "I wouldn't hesitate to accept your very kind offer, but I do not now need it."

He then proceeded to explain his meeting with the Grosvenors just when he stood in most need of assistance. He dwelt upon the kindness they had shown him, and the pleasure he had experienced in their society.

"I'm glad you've been so lucky. Grosvenor is a brick, but it ain't surprisin' he should take a fancy to you."

"I suppose that is a compliment, Mr. Tarbox," said Frank, smiling.

"Perhaps it is. I don't know much about compliments, but I know I felt awful

bad when I thought you was dead. I wanted to thrash that skunk within an inch of his life."

"I guess you could do it," said Frank, surveying the athletic form of his Yankee friend.

"I'll do it now if I ever come across him. Where do you think he is?"

"I think he has gone to America to ask pay for disposing of me."

"I guess so, too. They told me at that Hotel du Glacier (the last word Mr. Tarbox pronounced in two syllables) that he was goin' home to break the news to your folks. I guess your step-father won't break his heart badly."

"I must follow him," said Frank. "I shall feel uneasy till I reach home and unmask their villany."

"I hope we'll go together."

"I'll let you know, Mr. Tarbox, when I take passage. Then, if your business is concluded, we will be fellow-passengers once more."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. CRAVEN MEETS WITH UNEXPECTED
DIFFICULTIES.

MRS. CRAVEN was placed in a difficult position. At the special request of Frank, as conveyed in his letter, she had agreed to keep secret her knowledge of his safety. Of course, she could no longer indulge in her sorrow, which at first overwhelmed her. Her only course was to affirm her belief in his deliverance, though she was not at liberty to name the grounds upon which her belief was based. This must necessarily seem strange, as a "presentiment" was a very slender reason for the change in her manner. Had she been willing to play a part, Mrs. Craven might still have counterfeited grief, but this, again, was not in accordance with her nature. She preferred to be misunderstood,

and to excite surprise in those who were ignorant of the facts.

But this was not her only perplexity. There was the haunting suspicion that the man whom, unhappily for herself, she called husband, had instigated the wicked plot against the life of her only son. Frank believed it. It might not be true; yet, while there was a possibility of its truth, how could she continue to treat him with her usual courtesy? She sought to do it, but she could not. Though studiously polite, her manner became very cold—almost repellent. When Mr. Craven approached her she could hardly avoid shuddering.

Of course, this change became perceptible to him, and he was puzzled and disturbed. It upset all his calculations. He thought she would accept the fact of Frank's death—of which, by the way, he had no doubt himself—and would be so overcome by sorrow that he could readily obtain her consent to those business steps which would place the entire control of Frank's fortune in his hands. Yet here she was, declining to believe that he was dead,

and evidently her confidence in him was, for some reason, chilled and impaired.

Mr. Craven was impatient to broach the subject, and finding his wife's manner still the same, and with no prospect of alteration, he devised a plausible mode of approaching the subject which was so near his heart.

One evening, after the supper dishes were removed, just as Mrs. Craven was leaving the room, he called her back.

"My dear," he said, "will you sit down a few minutes? I have a few words to say to you."

She complied with his request.

"Ahem!" he commenced. "I have taken a step to-day of which I wish to apprise you."

"Indeed."

"Yes, my dear. Sensible of the uncertainty of life, I have to-day made my will."

"Indeed!" she said again, exhibiting no particular interest in Mr. Craven's communication.

"You do not ask me in what way I have left my money!"

"I do not suppose it concerns me."

"But it does, materially. I have no near relatives—at least, none that I care for. I have bequeathed all my property to you."

As Mr. Craven possessed nothing whatever apart from the money which his wife permitted him to control, this magnanimous liberality did not require any great self-denial or evince any special affection on his part. However, his wife did not know that, and upon her ignorance he relied. He expected her to thank him, but her manner continued cold.

"I am obliged to you for your intention," she said, "but I am not likely to survive you."

"We cannot tell, my dear. Should you live to be my widow, I should wish you to inherit all I left behind me."

"Thank you, but I should prefer that you would leave all you possess to the relatives you refer to."

"I have none that I care for."

"I suppose we must sometimes leave property to those we do not particularly like."

Mr. Craven was very much disappointed by the coldness with which his liberality was re-

ceived. He wanted to suggest that his wife should follow his example and leave him her fortune, increased as it was by Frank's, of which she was the legal heir. But this proposal was not so easy to make. Nevertheless, he determined, at any rate, to try for the control of Frank's estate.

"There's but one thing more I want to mention," he said. "But first let me say, that my will must stand without alteration. Of course, you can make such disposition of my property as you like when it falls to you, but to you it must go. Now, for the other matter. I beg you will excuse me from saying anything to grieve you, but it must be said. It is necessary for us to take some measures about poor Frank's property."

"Why is it necessary?"

"Since he is dead—"

"But he is not dead," said Mrs. Craven, quickly.

"Not dead? Have we not Colonel Sharp-ley's testimony? He saw the poor boy fall over the cliff."

Mr. Craven drew out his handkerchief and

pressed it to his eyes, but his wife displayed no emotion.

"Then I don't believe Colonel Sharpley," said Mrs. Craven.

"Don't believe him!" exclaimed Mr. Craven. "What possible motive can he have for stating what is not true?"

"It may be that Frank fell, but that would not necessarily kill him."

Still she shuddered, as fancy conjured up the terrible scene.

Mr. Craven shook his head.

"My dear," he said, "I regret to destroy your hopes. If such a fancy could be indulged without interfering with what ought to be done, I would say nothing to disturb your dream, wild and improbable as it is. But Frank left property. The law requires that it should be legally administered."

"Let it accumulate till my boy returns."

"That would be foolish and idle. The poor boy will never need it more;" and again Mr. Craven buried his emotion in the depth of his handkerchief. "His bright and promising career is over for this world. He has

gone where worldly riches will never benefit him more."

But for her private knowledge of Frank's safety, Mrs. Craven would have been moved by his pathetic reference; but, as it was, she stood it without manifesting any emotion, thus plunging her husband into deeper and more angry bewilderment.

"As I said before," returned his wife, "I firmly believe that Frank is still alive."

"What proof—what reason can you offer?" demanded Mr. Craven, impatiently.

"None, except my fixed conviction."

"Based upon nothing at all, and contradicted by the most convincing testimony of eye-witnesses."

"That is your view."

"It is the view of common sense."

"There is no need of doing anything about the property at present, is there? I am the legal heir, am I not?"

"Ahem! Yes."

"Then it is for me to say what shall be done. I am in no hurry to assume possession of my boy's fortune."

Mr. Craven bit his lip. Here was an impracticable woman. Apparently, nothing could be done with her—at least as long as she shared this delusion.

"I shall soon be able to convince you," he said, "that you are laboring under a happy but an untenable delusion. I expect Colonel Sharpley in the next steamer."

Mrs. Craven looked up now.

"Is he coming here?" she asked.

"Yes; so he writes. He wishes to tell you all about the accident—how it happened, and some details of poor Frank's last experiences in Europe. He felt that it would be a satisfaction to you to hear them from his own lips. He has, therefore, made this journey expressly on your account."

Mrs. Craven looked upon Sharpley as the murderer of her boy. It was his hand, she believed, that thrust him from the cliff and meant to compass his death. Could she receive such a man as a guest?

"Mr. Craven," she said, abruptly, "if Colonel Sharpley comes here, I have one request to make."

"What is it, my dear?"

"That you do not invite him to stay in this house."

"Why, my dear? I thought you would like to see the last companion of poor Frank," returned Mr. Craven, surprised.

"I cannot bear the sight of that man. But for him, Frank would not have incurred such peril."

"But Sharpley is not to blame for an accident. He could not help it. I regret that you should be so unreasonably prejudiced."

"Call it prejudice if you will. I could not endure the thought of entertaining him as a guest."

"This is very strange, my dear. What will he think?"

"I cannot say, but you must not invite him here."

Mrs. Craven left the room, leaving her husband angry and perplexed.

"Surely she can't suspect anything!" he thought, startled at the suggestion. "But no, it is impossible. We have covered our tracks

too carefully for that. On my soul, I don't know what to do. This obstinate woman threatens to upset all my plans. I will consult Sharpley when he comes."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SHARPLEY'S RETURN

A FEW days later, as Mr. Craven sat in his office smoking a cigar, while meditating upon the best method of overcoming his wife's opposition to his plans, the outer door opened, and Sharpley entered.

"Well, Craven," he said, coolly, "you appear to be taking it easy."

"When did you arrive?" asked Mr. Craven.

"Yesterday. You ought to feel complimented by my first call. You see I've lost no time in waiting upon you."

"I received your letter," said Craven.

"Both of them?"

"Yes."

"Then you know that your apprehensions were verified," said Sharpley, significantly.

"The boy was as imprudent as you antici-

pated. He actually leaned over too far, in looking over an Alpine precipice, and tumbled. Singular coincidence, wasn't it?"

"Then he is really dead?" said Mr. Craven, anxiously.

"Dead? I should think so. A boy couldn't fall three or four hundred feet, more or less, without breaking his neck. Unless he was made of India rubber, he'd be apt to smash something."

"Did you find his body?"

"No; I didn't stop long enough. I came away the next day. But, fearing that I might seem indifferent, and that might arouse suspicion, I left some money with a guide, the son of the landlord of the Hotel du Glacier, to find him and bury him."

"I would rather you had yourself seen the body interred. It would have been more satisfactory."

"Oh, well, I'll swear that he is dead. That will be sufficient for all purposes. But how does your wife take it?"

"In a very singular way," answered Mr. Craven.

"In a singular way? I suppose she is overwhelmed with grief, but I shouldn't call that singular—under the circumstances."

"But you are mistaken. She is not overwhelmed with grief."

Sharpley started.

"You don't mean to say she doesn't mind it?" he asked.

"No, it isn't that."

"What is it, then?"

"She won't believe the boy's dead."

"Won't believe he is dead? Did you show her my letter?"

"Yes."

"That ought to have been convincing."

"Of course it ought. Nothing could be more direct or straightforward. At first it did seem to have the proper effect. She fainted away, and for days kept her room, refusing to see any one, even me."

"Well, that must have been a sacrifice," said Sharpley, ironically; "not to see her devoted husband."

"But all at once there was a change. One day I came home at the close of the after-

noon, supposing, as usual, that my wife was in her room, but, to my surprise, she was below. She had ceased weeping and seemed even cheerful—though cold in her manner. On complimenting her upon her resignation, she astonished me by saying that she was convinced that Frank was still alive."

"Did she assign any reason for this belief?" asked Sharpley, thoughtfully.

"Only that she had a presentiment that he had escaped."

"Nothing more than this?"

"Nothing more."

"Pooh! She is only hoping to the last."

"It seems to be something more than that. If it was only hope, she would have fear also, and would show all the suspicion and anxiety of such a state of mind. But she is calm and cheerful, and appears to suffer no anxiety."

"That is singular to be sure," said Sharpley; "but I suppose it will not interfere with our designs?"

"But it will. When I ventured delicately to insinuate that Frank's property ought, according to law, to be administered upon, she

absolutely declined, saying that there would be time enough for that when he was proved to be dead."

"I can remove that difficulty," said Sharp-ley. "She will hardly need more than my oral testimony."

Mr. Craven shook his head.

"I forgot to say that she has taken an unaccountable prejudice against you. She doesn't want me to invite you to the house. She insists that she is not willing to meet you as her guest."

"What does this mean?" asked Sharp-ley, abruptly. "Do you think," he continued, in a lower tone, "that she has any suspicions?"

"I don't see how she can," answered Craven.

"Then why should she take such a prejudice against me?"

"She says, that but for you, Frank would never have gone abroad."

"And so, of course, not have met with this accident?"

"Yes."

"Then, it's all right. It's a woman's unreasonable whim," said Sharpley, apparently relieved by this explanation.

"That may be; but it is equally inconvenient. She won't believe your testimony, and will still insist that Frank is alive."

A new suspicion entered Sharpley's mind—this time, a suspicion of the good faith of his confederate, of whom, truth to tell, he had very little reason to form a good opinion.

"Look here, Craven," he said, his countenance changing. "I believe you are at the bottom of this."

"At the bottom of what?" exclaimed Mr. Craven, in genuine astonishment.

"I believe you've put your wife up to this."

"What should I do that for? Why should I bite my own nose off—in other words frustrate my own plans?"

"I am not sure that you would," returned Sharpley, suspiciously.

"How could it be otherwise?"

"You want to cheat me out of the sum I was to receive for this service."

"How?"

"By pretending you can't get possession of the boy's property. Then you can plead inability, and keep it all yourself."

"On my honor, you do me injustice," said Craven, earnestly.

"Your honor!" sneered Sharpley. "The least said about that the better."

"Be it so; but you must see that my interests are identified with yours. I will prove to you that all I have said is true."

"How will you prove it?"

"By bringing you face to face with Mrs. Craven. By asking you to come home with me."

"She said she did not want to receive me."

"You shall learn that from her manner. After you are convinced of it, after you find she won't credit your tale of Frank's death, we will consult as to what shall be done."

"Very well. It will be strange if, after what has already been accomplished, we cannot circumvent an obstinate woman."

"I think we can, with your help."

"Very well. When shall we try the experiment?"

"At once."

Mr. Craven took his hat and led the way out of his office, followed by Sharpley. They walked at a good pace to the handsome dwelling already referred to, and entered.

"Katy," said Mr. Craven, "go up stairs and tell your mistress that Colonel Sharpley is here. He has just returned from Europe."

"Yes, sir," said Katy, looking askance at Sharpley, whom, in common with her mistress, she regarded as a would-be murderer.

"Ma'am," said she, a moment later, in Mrs. Craven's chamber, "he's here."

"Who's here?"

"That murderin' villain, ma'am."

"What! Colonel Sharpley?" said Mrs. Craven, dropping her work in agitation.

"Yes, ma'am; and Mr. Craven wants you to come down and see him."

"How can I see that man, who tried to take the life of my dear boy?" said Mrs. Craven, in continued agitation. "What shall I do, Katy?"

"I'll tell you what I'd do, ma'am. I'd go down and see what I can find out about it. Jest ax him questions, and see what he's got to say for himself."

Mrs. Craven hesitated, but she wanted to learn something of her absent boy, and followed Katy's advice.

As she entered the room, Sharpley advanced to meet her, with extended hand. She did not seem to see it, but passed him coldly and sank into a rocking chair.

He bit his lip with vexation, but otherwise did not show his chagrin.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MRS. CRAVEN'S FIXED IDEA.

“YOU will probably wish to ask Colonel Sharpley about the circumstances attending poor Frank's loss,” said Craven, in a soft voice.

“I am ready to hear what Colonel Sharpley has to say,” returned Mrs. Craven, coldly.

“I see you are displeased with me, madame,” said Sharpley. “I can understand your feelings. You associate me with the loss of your son.”

“I do!” said Mrs. Craven, with emphasis.

“But that is not just, my dear,” said Mr. Craven. “Accidents may happen at any time—they are beyond human foresight or control. It is my friend Sharpley's misfortune that our Frank came to his sad end while in his company.”

"While in his company?" repeated Mrs. Craven, looking keenly at Sharpley.

"You think I should have prevented it, Mrs. Craven. Gladly would I have done so, but Frank was too quick for me. With a boy's curiosity he leaned over the precipice, lost his balance and fell."

"When did this happen—what day of the month?"

"It was the eighteenth of August."

Mrs. Craven remembered with joy that the letter which she had read, addressed to Ben Cameron, was dated a week later; it was a convincing proof of Frank's safety.

"You are sure that it was the eighteenth?"

"Yes, perfectly so," answered Sharpley, not, of course, seeing the drift of her question.

"Did you find Frank's body?" asked Mrs. Craven, with less emotion than Sharpley expected from the nature of the question.

"No," he answered, and immediately afterward wished he had said yes.

"Then," said Mrs. Craven, "Frank may be alive."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Craven and Sharpley in unison.

"Why impossible?"

"The precipice was too high; it was absolutely impossible that any one could have fallen from such a height and not lose his life."

"But you did not find the body?"

"Because I started for home the very next day to let you know what had happened. I left directions with a guide to search for and bury the body when found. He has doubtless done it. A letter from him may be on the way to me now announcing his success."

"When you receive the letter you can show it to me," said Mrs. Craven, quietly.

"Certainly," said Sharpley.

Then he regretted that he had not, while in Europe, forged such a letter, or, failing this, that he had not positively declared that he had personally witnessed Frank's burial. This would have removed all difficulty.

"I have not expressed my sympathy in your loss," said Sharpley; "but that is hardly necessary."

"It is not at all necessary," said Mrs. Craven, "for I believe Frank to be alive."

"How can you believe it," asked Sharpley, with difficulty repressing his irritation, "in the face of my testimony?"

"You are not sure of Frank's death."

"I am as sure as I can be."

"I am not," said Mrs. Craven, quietly.

"But, permit me to ask, how could he possibly escape from the consequences of such a fall?"

"That I cannot explain; but there have been escapes quite as wonderful. I have a presentiment that Frank is alive."

"I did not think you were so superstitious, my dear," said Mr. Craven.

"Call it superstition if you please. With me it is conviction."

Involuntarily the eyes of the two—Craven and Sharpley—met. There were irritation and perplexity in the expression of each. What could be done with such a

perverse woman, so wholly inaccessible to reason?

"Confound it!" thought Sharpley. "If I had foreseen all this trouble, I would have stayed and seen the brat under ground. Of all the unreasonable women I ever met, Mrs. Craven takes the palm."

"I have not yet told the circumstances," he said, aloud. "Let me do so. You will then, probably, understand that your hopes have nothing to rest upon."

He gave a detailed account, exaggerating the dangerous character of the cliff purposely.

"What do you think now, my dear?" asked Mr. Craven.

"I believe that Frank escaped. If he has, he will come home, sooner or later. I shall wait patiently. I must now beg to be excused."

She rose from her chair, and left the room.

"What do you think of that, Sharpley?" demanded Craven, when she was out of ear-shot. "Did I not tell you the truth?"

"Yes, your wife is the most perverse,

unreasonable woman it was ever my lot to encounter."

"You see the difficulty of our position, don't you?"

"As to the property?"

"Yes. Of course, that's all I care for. Believing, as she does, that Frank is alive, she won't have his property touched."

"It is a pity you are not the guardian, instead of your wife."

"It is a thousand pities. But what can we do? I want your advice."

Sharpley sat in silent thought for five minutes.

"Will it answer if I show your wife a certificate from the guide that he has found and buried Frank?"

"Where will you get such a certificate?"

"Write it myself if necessary."

"That's a good plan," said Craven, nodding.

"Do you think she will resist the weight of such a document as that?"

"I don't see how she can."

"Then it shall be tried."

Three days later, as soon as it was deemed prudent, Sharpley called again at the house. He had boarded meanwhile at the hotel in the village, comprehending very clearly that Mr. Craven was not at liberty to receive him as a guest.

Mrs. Craven descended, at her husband's request, to meet the man whom she detested. She had received a second call from Ben, who, with all secrecy, showed her a line from Frank, to the effect that he was well, had found good friends, and should very shortly embark for America. It was an effort for the mother to conceal her joy, but she did so for the sake of expediency.

"When I was last here, Mrs. Craven," said Sharpley, "you expressed doubt as to your son's death."

"I did."

"I wish you had had good reason for your doubt, but I knew only too well that there was no chance for his safety."

"Well?"

"I am now prepared to prove to you that he is dead."

"How will you prove it?"

"Read that, madame," he said, extending a paper.

She took the paper extended to her, and read as follows :

"HONORED SIR :—As you requested, I searched for the body of the poor boy who fell over the cliff. I found it concealed among some bushes at the bottom of the cliff. It was very much bruised and disfigured, but the face was less harmed than the body, so that we knew it at once. As you directed, I had it buried in our little cemetery. I will point out the grave to you when you come this way.

"I hope what I have done will meet your approval, and I remain, honored sir, your servant,

"BAPTISTE LAMOUREUX,

"Alpine Guide."

"That removes every doubt," said Mr. Craven, applying his handkerchief to his eyes. "Poor Frank!"

"When did you receive this letter, Colonel Sharpley?" asked Mrs. Craven.

"Yesterday."

"It was written by a Swiss guide?"

"Yes, madame."

"He shows an astonishing knowledge of the English language," she said, with quiet meaning.

"He probably got some one to write it for him," said Sharpley, hastily.

"So I thought," she said, significantly.

"What difference can that make, my dear?" demanded Mr. Craven. "It seems to me of no importance whether he wrote it himself, or some traveler for him. You can't doubt Frank's death now?"

"I do."

"Good heavens! What do you mean?"

"I mean that I am confident that my boy is alive. No one can convince me to the contrary," and she rose and left the room.

"The woman is mad!" muttered Sharpley.

So she is," said Craven, rubbing his hands, as an evil thought entered his mind. "She is the subject of a mad delusion. Now I see my way clear."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this. I will obtain a certificate of her madness from two physicians, and have her confined in an asylum. Of course, a mad

woman cannot control property. Everything will come into my hands, and all will be right."

"You've hit it at last, Craven!" said Sharp-ley, with exultation. "That plan will work. We'll feather our nests, and then she may come out of the asylum, or stay there, it will be all the same to us."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RETRIBUTION.

THE two rogues lost no time in carrying out their villanous design. They thirsted for the gold, and were impatient to get rid of the only obstacle to its acquisition. Sharpley found two disreputable hangers-on upon the medical profession in the city of New York who, for twenty-five dollars a piece, agreed to pronounce Mrs. Craven insane. They came to the village, and were introduced to Mrs. Craven as business friends. The subject of Frank's loss was cunningly introduced, and she once more affirmed her belief in his safety. This was enough. An hour later, in Mr. Craven's office, the two physicians signed a paper certifying that his wife was insane. They received their money and went back to the city.

The next day was fixed upon by the conspirators for taking Mrs. Craven to an insane asylum.

Copy
Late the day previous a Cunard steamer arrived at its dock. Among the passengers were two of our acquaintances. One was Frank Hunter, our hero, sun-browned and healthy, heavier and taller, and more self-reliant than when, three months before, he sailed from the port of New York bound for Liverpool. The other no one can mistake. The blue coat and brass buttons, the tall and somewhat awkward form, the thin but shrewd and good-humored face, are those of Jonathan Tarbox, of Squashboro', State o' Maine.

"Well, Frank, I'm tarnal glad to be here," said Mr. Tarbox. "It seems kind of nat'ral. Wonder what they'll say in Squashboro' when they see me come home a man of fortun'."

"Your plow is a great success, Mr. Tarbox. You ought to be proud of it."

"I be, Frank. My pardner says he wouldn't take twenty thousand for his half of the invention, but I'm satisfied with the

ten thousand he gave me. I didn't never expect to be worth ten thousand dollars."

"You'll be worth a hundred thousand before you're through."

"Sho! you don't mean it. Any how, I guess Sally Sprague'll be glad she's going to be Mrs. Tarbox. I say, Frank we'll live in style. Sally shall sit in the parlor, and play on the pianner. She wouldn't have done that if she'd took up with Tom North. He's a shiftless, good-for-nothin' feller. But, I say, Frank, what'll your folks say to see you?"

"Mother'll be overjoyed, but Mr. Craven won't laugh much. I hope," he added, gravely, "he hain't been playing any of his tricks on mother."

"Do you think that skunk, Sharpley, has got back?"

"I think he has, and it makes me anxious. Mr. Tarbox, will you do me a favor?"

"Sartin, Frank."

"Then, come home with me. I may need a friend."

"I'll do it, Frank," said Jonathan, grasping our hero's hand. "Ef that skunk's round

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"I'll do it, Frank," said Jonathan, grasping our hero's hand. "Ef that skunk's round

the neighborhood, I'll give him a piece of my mind."

"Thank you," said Frank. "I am not afraid of him, but I am only a boy, and they might be too much for me. With you I have no cause to fear."

They reached the village depot, and set out to walk. Frank met two or three friends, who looked upon him as one raised from the dead. He merely spoke and hurried on.

When a few rods from the house, their attention was called to a woman, who was running up the street, without any covering upon her head, sobbing like one in distress.

"Why, it's our Katy!" exclaimed Frank, in great agitation. "Good heavens! what can have happened?"

"Katy!" he cried out.

"Oh, Master Frank, is it you?" exclaimed Katy, laughing hysterically. "You're come in time. Run home as fast as ever you can."

"Why, what's the matter?" demanded Frank, in great alarm.

"Them rascals, Mr. Craven and Sharpley,

pretend that your mother is crazy, just because she won't hear to your bein' dead, and they're takin' her to the crazy 'sylum. I couldn't stand it, and I run out to see if I couldn't get help."

"The blamed skunk!" exclaimed Mr. Tarbox, swinging his arms threateningly. "Let me get a hold of him and he won't never know what hurt him."

Meanwhile, Craven and Sharpley had forced Mrs. Craven into a close carriage, and they were just driving out of the yard when our hero and his friend rushed to the rescue.

Mr. Tarbox sprang to the horses' heads and brought them to a stop, while Frank hurried to the door of the coach, which he pulled open. Inside were Mrs. Craven, her husband and Sharpley.

They looked angrily to the door, but their dismay may be conceived when they met the angry face of one whom both believed to be dead.

"Oh, Frank!" screamed Mrs. Craven. "You are come home at last."

"Yes, mother. Let me help you out of the carriage."

"You shall not go!" said Mr. Craven, desperately. "Frank, your mother's insane. We are taking her to the asylum. It is for her good."

"Save me, Frank!" implored Mrs. Craven.

"I will save you, mother," said Frank, firmly.

"Drive on!" shouted Sharpley, savagely.

"Look a here!" exclaimed a new voice, that of Jonathan Tarbox, who was now peeping into the carriage. "That is the skunk that tried to murder you."

"What do you mean, fellow?" demanded Sharpley.

"If you don't understand, come out and I'll lick it into you, you skunk! Tell your mother to come out, and let that skunk stop her if he dares!" and Mr. Tarbox coolly drew out a revolver and pointed it at Sharpley.

"I'll get out, too," said Mr. Craven, faintly.

"No, you won't. I've got a letter of yours,

written to that skunk, advisin' him to pitch Frank over a precipice."

"It's a lie!" ejaculated Craven, pallid with fear.

"It comes to the same thing," said Mr. Tarbox, coolly. "When he's tried for murder, you'll come in second fiddle."

Sharpley saw his danger. Mr. Craven was already out of the carriage. He made a dash for the door, but found himself in Jonathan's powerful grasp. In a moment he was sprawling on his back in the yard.

"Jest lie there till I tell you to get up," he said.

By this time two neighbors—athletic farmers—entered the yard. Frank briefly explained the matter to them, and Mr. Tarbox asked their assistance to secure Sharpley and Craven.

"Let me go, Frank. I'm your step-father," implored Craven. "If that man has attempted your life, I know nothing of it. Blame him; not me."

"Oh, that is your game," said Sharpley, "you cowardly hound! You want to sell me

and go scot-free yourself. Then, gentlemen, it becomes my duty to say that this man has no business here. At the time he married this boy's mother he had a wife living in London."

"It's a lie!" faltered Craven.

"It's the truth. I saw her two months since, and so did the boy. You remember Mrs. Craven, whom you relieved?"

"Yes," said Frank, in astonishment.

"She is that man's wife."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Frank.
"Then my mother is free."

"Moreover, he hired me to carry you abroad, with the understanding that you should not return, in order that he might enjoy your fortune."

"You miserable snake in the grass!" exclaimed Mr. Tarbox, energetically.

Mr. Craven, who was a coward at heart, was thoroughly overwhelmed at the revelations of his baseness, and made no resistance when taken into custody. Sharpley and he were closely confined until indictments could be found against them, and, to anticipate

matters a little, were tried, convicted and sentenced to ten years in the State prison. It was found that Mr. Craven had squandered several thousand dollars belonging to his wife, but Frank's fortune was intact, and they indulged in no useless regrets for the money that was gone.

Frank went back to school, where he remained until the next summer, when he induced his mother to visit Europe under his guidance. They visited his friends, the Grosvenors, by whom they were cordially received. They went to Switzerland, where Mrs. Hunter (Craven no longer), beheld, with a shudder, the scene of her son's fall and escape.

Some years have now elapsed. Frank is a young man, and junior partner in a prosperous New York firm. He is not married, but rumor has it that next fall he is to visit London for the purpose of uniting his fortunes to those of Beatrice Grosvenor, whose early fancy for our hero has ripened into a mature affection. It is probable that Mr. Grosvenor will be induced, after his daughter's marriage, to

establish himself in New York, in order to be near her.

Frank's mother still lives, happy in the goodness and the prosperity of her son. She has improved in health, and is likely to live many years, an honored member of Frank's household.

Our Yankee friend, Jonathan Tarbox, is one of the magnates of Squashboro', State o' Maine. He and his partner have built a large manufactory, from which plows are turned out by hundreds and thousands annually. He is now Squire Tarbox, and Sally Sprague has changed her last name for one beginning with T. I should not be surprised to see him a member of Congress, or Governor of Maine some time. ✓

Frank has settled a pension upon the real Mrs. Craven, who will probably never see her husband again, as he is reported in poor health, and not likely to leave the prison alive. Sharpley succeeded in effecting his escape, and it is not known where he has taken refuge. / Ben Cameron is a trusted clerk in Frank's employ, and our hero will take care

that his old school friend prospers. Though his path lies in sunshine, Frank is not likely to forget the peril from which he so narrowly escaped.

THE END.

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